

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**THE GEOGRAPHIES OF THE SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES OF DEAF LEARNERS
AT A SPECIAL SCHOOL IN SWAZILAND: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

BY

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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DECLARATION

I, Honeydale Njabuliso Nhleko, declare that this dissertation entitled:

The Geographies of deaf learners in a special school in Swaziland: A Narrative Inquiry

Is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and citations. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Honeydale Njabuliso Nhleko

2016

Professor Pholoho Morojele (Supervisor)

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter. It's been wonderful to have her in my life. She was there to encourage me even when I was discouraged, I found inspiration in her. She would understand when I had to travel and leave her behind, as young as she is. May God bless her and make her study even more than what I've acquired at my age so that she achieves a higher degree of education.

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ABSTRACT

The focus of the study was to explore the experiences of deaf learners in a special residential school for the deaf in the Lubombo region in the eastern part of Swaziland. The study adopted a narrative inquiry approach, with a total of six participants, comprising of 3 female and 3 male deaf learners. The participants were selected using purposive sampling. Data generation of the study used semi-structured interviews for individual and focus group interviews. The Photovoice method was also used as a means to see through the eyes of the participants. In addition, a participatory research tool was employed to generate discussions in both individual and focus group to explore with the participants their experiences at the schooling context. Triangulation techniques were also adopted.

Findings of the study revealed that the deaf learners' language [sign language] and their culture is not recognized. Some teachers and house parents hardly associate or socialize with deaf children. They have a negative attitude towards the deaf learners. The findings of the study also revealed that the dynamics affecting deaf learners within the residential school context includes disconnect between deaf learners and their parents or care givers; stigmatization; involvement in extracurricular activities such as sports and tours; socializing of deaf learners with peers; and power dynamics affect the decisions such as the curriculum and assessment of deaf learners. The findings further revealed that deaf learners' education does not receive proper attention in Swaziland. Nothing much is being done in the education system or structure to cater for the deaf learners, but rather continued to cater to hearing learners. This includes the limited use of Sign Language, curriculum and the assessment of the deaf learners.

Finally, the findings also revealed that support mechanism for deaf learners could include assistance from house parents in writing assignments. Teachers in the school for the deaf must use Sign Language to teach deaf learners. The people who are responsible for writing the curriculum, examination and other aspects affecting the education of the deaf need to do so within the scope of the deaf culture.

In conclusion, the deaf learners in Swaziland do not receive proper attention and provision such as deaf culture, language, relevant personnel, socialization, curriculum and examination. These findings implies that there is a need for Government Ministries, organizations and individuals working with deaf children to develop methods and strategies ensuring that deaf learners are a part of decision making and that their language and identities are valued. Parents for the deaf learners should be engaged as key stakeholders in looking at the future careers and opportunities of their children. Teachers need to dedicate their time and energy to developing the curriculum to enhance the learning for deaf learners. There is a need to allocate enough resource to cater for the needs for the deaf children up to tertiary education. Furthermore, a policy for deaf need to be developed as the existing policy for disability does not provide for the deaf children. Finally, further research can be conducted on the involvement of the adult deaf learners in developing the education of the deaf in Swaziland is necessary.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to understand the geographies of deaf learners in a schooling context in a residential special school in Swaziland. Learners were chosen from the upper grades: Grade 5, Grade 6 and Grade 7. Deaf learners used to write external examinations set by deaf education specialists. These deaf education specialists were also teachers at the school, and they would set the external examinations under the supervision of the Examination Council of Swaziland (ECOS). The school was advised to follow the mainstream curriculum and write the same examination written by all schools. This resulted in a higher failure rate on the external examination.

Similarly, Marsharck (2014) reported that for a long time (decades), the expectations on academic performance for the deaf students was lower than for their hearing peers. At least 50% of deaf and hard hearing students completing high school in America read at or below fourth-grade levels (Cohen, 2012). The lower performance of deaf learners is an indication of the power that the construction of deaf learners can have on their potential performance in school that may affect them throughout their entire lives. Cohen further reported that teachers in mainstream schools think that if they remove the communication barriers they can teach their deaf kids as though they are hearing kids. However, Cohen felt that there is a need to educate parents and mainstream teachers handling kids that are different (e.g. deaf learners).

Therefore, it is clear that the way deaf learners learn and master things is different, but this difference is not what makes them seen as slow learners. Rather, it about the need to focus on deaf learner's potential instead of their failures. Deaf learners can achieve beyond what is

currently expected of them, if taught through emphasizing their learning strengths. Marschark (2014) argued that since deaf learners have difficulties of retaining sequences there is a need for teachers teaching them to arrange material visually and spatially so that the deaf kids would do better.

This chapter is organised in such a way as to provide the aims and rationale for the study, followed by stating the research objectives and questions, as well as the background of the study. Beyond that, the significance of the study will be carefully explored, and the structural outline of dissertation will be articulated towards the end of the chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Swaziland being a signatory of these World Declarations has enacted the National Children's policy (2008). The policy states that "*government of Swaziland shall provide appropriate and accessible education and remedial services to all children.....*" (National Children's policy, 2008, p.2) The Education Sector Policy (2011) concedes that human resources will be provided to educate every child whatever their life circumstances.

Part of the phenomenon that the study seeks to address, is the issue of rendering deaf learners automatically slow. Mackay (2001) in a newsletter defines a slow learner as a child below average intelligence, whose thinking skills have developed significantly more slowly than norm for his/her age. This child will go through the same basic developmental stages as other children, but will do so at a significantly slower rate. Researchers have even pointed out the characteristics of slow learners as learners with limited cognitive capacity and poor memory though the cognitive capacity may be low; they have a right to education like any other child. Given the rate at which deaf children are enrolled at school, typically around the age of 6, but sometimes as late as 16. This proves problematic as the linguistic acquisition of these learners is delayed, and they have limited cognitive development due to barriers to formal education. This leads to the assumption by parents and educators that deaf children are indeed slow. In Swaziland

deaf learners are expected to write the mainstream examination regardless of their poor performances due to the problem mentioned above.

Having such a document in the country has prompted the researcher to do a study on the geographies of the schooling experiences of deaf learners at a special school for the deaf in Swaziland. The interest is, to navigate stories told by these learners about their schooling experiences, to discuss the dynamics affecting learners in schooling context, to explore places and spaces of deaf learners within context and to establish how deaf learners negotiate the complex and varied spaces of schooling, all while trying to better understand the phenomenon of labelling such learners as slow.

1.3 AIMS AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The study aims to navigate stories told by deaf learners about their schooling experiences in a School for the Deaf in Swaziland. In order to achieve this, the places and spaces of deaf learners within the schooling context were carefully explored. Moreover, the study aimed to establish how deaf learners negotiate the complex and varied spaces of schooling, while also discussing the dynamics that affect deaf learners in this very specific context.

These aims guided the rationale of this study, which is to explore the deaf learners' construction of their geographies at the school for the deaf in Swaziland. It is essential to acknowledge how the construction of learning bears on the deaf learners at school. By exploring the students' experiences the goal was to better understand the impact that their teachers, house parents and even parents have on them, in terms of understanding their own self-image, and thus their academic, and social potential. Understanding the stories told by deaf learners about their school experiences and the construction of their learning situation is an important aspect of research, which begs the question: What dynamics affect these

learners? What are the spaces and places of deaf learners within schooling complex? How do deaf learners negotiate the complex and varied spaces of schooling?

The need for such a document in the country has prompted the researcher to do a study on the geographies of learners at school for the deaf in Swaziland. The interest is, to navigate stories told by deaf learners about their schooling experiences in a school for the deaf in Swaziland; to discuss the dynamics affecting deaf learners in schooling context; to explore places and spaces of deaf learners within context and to establish how deaf learners negotiate the complex and varied spaces of schooling. It was observed that deaf learners were not catered for, thus the need to be addressed. This means that nobody had ever worried, or questioned their poor academic performance. The reason for being neglected was that no one understood the problem of deafness they were experiencing and its consequences. This problem begins at home and also was being reinforced at school by their poor performance. The deaf learners internalise their characteristics which contributes much due to limited cognitive capacity and poor memory. The deaf learners have a different understanding from the teachers and parents on their own potential and abilities to learn. The teachers and parents' perceptions on the deaf learners' abilities lower their self-esteem, and cause them to doubt their abilities. Teachers and parents always compared deaf learners to their hearing counterparts. This is further perpetuated by the teachers of the deaf themselves, who frequently comment that certain things are too difficult for the deaf learners, instead of framing those "difficult things" in a way that is more appropriate to the deaf learners. The attitudes that teachers have towards the students are further reflected by their parents, who share similar beliefs on the abilities of the learners. Thus, the situation is perpetuated and the idea that the deaf learners cannot achieve as much as their hearing peers is reinforced. This further influences the practices adopted by the

teachers in the classrooms, and the attitudes and beliefs held by the parents (Shaver & Blackorby, 2014).

The inspiration of this study was to find out provisions that must be in place in order for the deaf learners to perform at par with mainstream learners. Deaf children in Swaziland are expected to perform at the same level as learners who are hearing yet Marshack (2010) in his latest research revealed that deaf students do not always learn, think, or know in the same ways as hearing children. This has resulted in a high failure rate of deaf learners in the external examination, thus hindering the appropriate recognition of their potential, and further constructing their identities as deaf learners.

Cohen (2012) advocated against the full inclusion of deaf individuals in mainstream schools, the As the Government of Swaziland seeks to adopt the ever-changing special educational policies crafted by other countries; the school for the deaf becomes the victim of the circumstance. In several cases witnessed, children first enrolled at the school were later removed by their parents or caregivers and placed in mainstream schools, only to be brought back, often having lost much of what they had previously gained while attending the School for the Deaf Primary. This move of the deaf learners created a lag in the students' academic development, as they must first re-acquire sign language, and become re-socialized into the school, often being placed back in the pre-school, the class in which sign language is instilled by the deaf adults.

As a result, children spent their entire childhood, in primary education, on and off at the School for the Deaf. Here, Cohen's (2012) words ring true att, "Social acceptance and not academic realization, appears to be their primary measure of success." In this case, the goal

of inclusion tends to lean more on socially involving deaf individuals in a mainstream setting, without realizing that the social and academic experiences of deaf learners are inherently intertwined. While deaf learners can interact and engage with hearing students, the constant buzz of information acquired through audio means leaves the student excluded, despite the best intentions of educators. Without an interpreter or other appropriate means of support, deaf learners in mainstream settings are not only socially isolated, but remain behind academically as well.

Cawthon (2001) revealed that interpreters serve a crucial role in being the voice for students whose speech was not intelligible. Cohen also noted that the interpreters helped giving deaf learners opportunities to participate in a group discussion and classroom dialogue. Such opportunities deaf learners have in expressing themselves more wholly are crucial to better understanding their identity within a larger social context. As a teacher of the deaf, I am expected to act as a role model in assisting to empower the deaf learners not only on positive social identities, but encourage their academic achievement as well. This in turn, will lay a strong foundation in the lower grades. Maphanga (2014) reported that it is necessary to understand how deaf students learn to be who they are, how they relate with other students as well as what it means for improving children's social relationships at school.

This idea on understanding deaf learners is also perpetuated in the struggle to recognize Sign Language as an official language in Swaziland. If the first language of deaf individuals continues to be seen as inconsequential and sub-par to spoken languages, the inclusion and integration of deaf learners will remain impossible. However, in recognizing the experiences of deaf learners at the school for the deaf, seeking to better understand how they navigate and negotiate the school context, strategies would emerge that would highlight the appropriate steps that need to be taken to provide the best support for both academic and social success.

As an educator of the deaf who is expected to conduct the teaching and assessment of deaf learners, I need to understand the geographies of the deaf learners in order to bring forth the importance of stimulating the receptive and expressive language during the early formative years (preferably before age of 2 years) then the deaf learner will not experience the communication and language problems which in turn affects the socio-emotional development which adversely affect the Psycho-educational development which is a sentiment shared by Bleckly (2014).

Being teacher of the deaf by profession, places me in a relative position to understand deaf learners construction and experiences of their schooling. The American Speech- Language-Hearing Association (2013) revealed that language deficit causes learning problems that result in reduced academic achievement which result in slow learning. Singh (2006) concurred with the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association that intelligence of the deaf learner is generally lower than that of a normal child. Similarly, Johnson, Liddell and Erting (1989) reported that deaf learners' results were markedly depressing in spelling, paragraph comprehension, vocabulary, mathematics concepts, mathematics computation, social studies and science.

Bearing in mind that deaf learners achieve lower than normal learners, there is a clear need to engage the students in the process and development of their own learning. The provision of the opportunity for deaf learners to express their experiences, share stories on how they have navigated and negotiated their schooling within this particular context; it is hoped that strategies that can be utilized to benefit current and future learners reach their full potential would emerge. Additionally, as the study seeks to enlighten educators and policy makers in the field of special and deaf education, the study hopefully provided the opportunity to adjust

the current approach taken (mainstreaming deaf learners), and instead, embrace deaf learners as separate from their hearing peers, but just as capable of having a successful and meaningful life.

1.4 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study sought to understand the stories of deaf learners regarding their schooling experiences and how they relate to their learning. In addition to that, the study aimed to analyse the complex dynamics hindering deaf learners in the school context. Another objective was to scrutinize the layers of the spaces and places of deaf learners within their school environment and the final objective was to observe how deaf learners negotiate the complex spaces in the learning environment.

Wyness (2003) defined children's geographies "*a branch of study within human geography which explores the places and spaces of children's lives experientially, ethically and politically*" (p. 20). In addition to that, Maphanga (2014) argued that children are taken seriously thus often excluded in debates affecting their desires. This highlights the necessity of framing the study through children's geographies as a means to better understand the places and spaces of deaf learners in the residential school environment.

Maphanga (2014) also revealed presented The New Sociology of Childhood as "*a branch of sociology focusing on the ways societies conceptualize and organize childhood*" (p. 22). This is a central aspect of the study, which seeks to place children's voice and perceptions at the centre, recognising their viewpoints as valid in their own right. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child asserts that "*children are not empty containers but active participants and social actors who shape their own individualities*" (p. 23). This view plays a key role in providing an opportunity for the deaf learners to voice their concerns and

share their vital insights into how they negotiate the complex dynamics of the schooling space.

Guided by Children's Geographies as the new sociology of children's studies, the research questions of the study were:

1. What stories do deaf learners tell about their school experiences in one school for the deaf in Swaziland?
2. What are the dynamics affecting deaf learners in the schooling context?
3. What are the spaces and places of deaf learners within schooling complex?
4. How do deaf learners negotiate the complex and varied spaces of schooling?

1.5 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 Geographical Context of the Study

The study was conducted in a residential School for the Deaf in Siteki, located one kilometre from town, in the Lubombo Region, on the way to Good Shepherd Hospital. The school is built on municipality land. The town boasts of several grocery stores, a police station, post office and several primary and secondary mainstream schools. Geographically, the school rests on the eastern side of the country, far from the capital city – Mbabane and the bustling hub of Swaziland - Manzini. The school is the only primary school for the deaf in Swaziland. The town of Siteki sits on top of a Lubombo Plateau, which forms the boundary of Swaziland and Mozambique.

1.5.2 Socio-Economic Context of the Study

The social and economic status of the school is fully maintained by the government by catering for boarding facilities including supplying food. This is covered under the recently

mandated Free Primary Education Policy, whereby the children's school fees are covered by the government and other assisting organizations such as the European Union. The people working as support staff and teachers are also employed by the government, and are not interviewed or recruited at the local level by the school administration. There are deaf adults who are teachers' assistants responsible for teaching Sign Language to learners and teachers, they are also role models and instil deaf culture to the deaf learners. Wages for these deaf assistant teachers are paid for by parents of the deaf learners, as they are not hired by the government.

Most of the deaf learners admitted are from hearing parents, some are orphaned and some are from single parent headed families. A majority of the single parent cases in the school are a result of divorces triggered by failure on one spouse, especially fathers, to accept the deaf child in the family. Alternatively, when the mother re-marries the child is left with the father, and often results in feuds over custody. Thus, the deaf children become victims of the circumstances. Only two children at the school have deaf parents, which means that the deaf children have full language support while at home. For the majority of learners who have hearing parents, many of them struggle to be included in their families due to the language barrier which puts a strain on the relationship with other family members. While hearing parents of hearing children are more likely to be able to assist their children academically, and instil valuable life lessons, this is not the case for deaf learners, where parents rely on teachers to provide full support to their children. Ten percent of the deaf learners enrolled at the school have HIV, and are on ARVs. However, there is a grave issue where the children are not informed or aware for the reasons they are taking these medications.

1.5.3 Policy Context of the Study

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland (2005) Clause 1 of Section 20 states that “*All persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect and shall enjoy equal protection of the law*” (p. 14). Under this declaration it is clear that the priority of the Kingdom of Swaziland is not only to protect the rights of its citizens but to ensure that they are not hindered due to their particular situations. This is further supported by Clause 3 in Section 20, which is on equality before the law. The Clause state that: “*For the purposes of this section, ‘discriminate’ means to give different treatment to different persons attributable only or mainly to their respective descriptions by gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, birth, tribe, creed or religion, or social or economic standing, political opinion, age or disability*” (p. 14). However, reflecting on the language policy established by the constitutions leaves the researcher to ponder, since it states that the official languages of Swaziland are siSwati and English as cited by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland of 2005 in Clause 2 of Section 3. These policy documents aim to enable Swazi citizens the right to a full and productive life. However these clauses and policies are discordant with each other. This is in agreement with Clause 6 of Section 60 - Social objectives, whereby it is acknowledged that “*The State and society shall recognise the right of persons with disabilities to respect and human dignity*” (2005, p. 42).

The Education Sector Policy of Swaziland (2011) also emphasizes the need to assure every learner in Swaziland of a meaningful participation and achievement in the teaching and learning process. The key phrase in the statement here is “meaningful”, and raises the question of how well a learner can participate if provisions are not made to ensure that language barriers are alleviated. Moreover, the section also purports that no child shall be denied access to education at any level on the basis of disability. It is also envisaged that all attitudinal and physical barriers to inclusive education shall be removed in public, private and

other schools and institutions. Under this policy, deaf learners are entitled to an education that is rich with their language and culture, as well as the presence of qualified teachers who can further support their learning. This also pertains to the need to have trained interpreters available where deaf learners are located, to encourage meaningful conversation and assist in their full inclusion. In addition to that, any and all personnel working under such an institution need to be sensitised as well. This indicates that all stigmatisation towards deafness and sign language need to be removed from the schooling context, as well as inform parents on the appropriate treatment of their deaf children. Here, “access” can be interpreted as not only the removal of physical barriers that prevent learners from attending and participating school, but also the ways in which the learners are taught need to be carefully considered and adapted to meet the needs of the learners, particularly those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Finally, the Education Sector Policy of Swaziland (2011) argues that curriculum development is the cornerstone of an effective education system. Thus, it must be responsive to changing goals and needs and so must be reviewed from time to time by an inclusive group of educationists and stakeholders to ensure its relevance and concurrence. Therefore, it is necessary that the learners themselves be involved in the decision-making surrounding their own learning as they are the most crucial stakeholders.

1.5.4 Educational Context of the Study

The rights of a child are enshrined in the Jomtein World Conference (1990 p .2) on Education for All. It urges and emphasizes to all governments that *“Education is the fundamental right for everyone irrespective of physical, social, and psychological condition.* Furthermore, the

Salamanca Declaration (1994 p viii.) believed and proclaimed that every child has unique characteristics, interest, abilities and learning needs.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol from the United Nations (2006) in the Preamble advocates for the recognition of the importance for persons with disabilities of their individual autonomy and independence, including the freedom to make their own choices. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol from the United Nations further state that there is a need to consider that persons with disability should have the opportunity to be actively involved in decision-making processes about policies and programmes, including those directly concerning them. Similarly, the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) advocates that *“Education is rendered as a primary means for gaining independence, citizenship rights, appropriate employment, economic power and self-empowerment (p. 1).* Bearing this in mind, a person needs to have holistic access to various aspects of society in order to be human and truly free. This is further expanded upon through the analysis that language is a key component of a persons’ identity and empowerment. The WFD further echoes that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (2006) in that learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community should be of utmost importance moving forward. In addition, WFD *raised* a concern about the difficult conditions faced by persons with disabilities who are subject to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language and so on.

The WFD delved further into the educational rights of deaf children by stating that deaf children are part of human diversity and they are entitled to respect for their right to preserve their identities by including these principles in all spheres of education of deaf children such

as school legislation, curricular, learning materials, teacher teaching, school subjects and school practices (WFD, Education on the Rights for Deaf children, 2015). Moreover, the WFD states that *“Education is in itself not a place or a goal, but a continuous, life-long process enabling one to acquire multiple skills needed to become an independent, educated, employed, self-actualising, participating and contributing citizen of one’s community society”*.

1.6 THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Cohne, Manion and Morrison (2007) define methodology as a philosophy that shapes the fundamentals of an entire research approach and which has to be backed by evidence. In order to meet the objectives of the study, the narrative inquiry method was adopted. Six children aged 14-18 years were engaged in a photo voice project. Photo voice is a participatory method to obtain first hand experiences of the learners. This particular activity generated valuable discussion from the learners related to the research questions and the objectives of the study. In addition to the photo voice, the participants were also interviewed individually and participated in a focus group discussion where the photos they took were analysed and explained on a deeper level.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to examine the role of the spaces and places and their influence towards the learning of a deaf learner. This study also seeks to interrogate this and understand the personal narratives of the deaf learner, and what impacts their education. This understanding is in line with what McMillan and Schumacher (2010) cited regarding the impact of educational research. McMillan and Schumacher noted that schools and policy makers seeking to improve educational practices may be seen as a process whereby they have to first

understand the narratives of the people involved in that context. This supports the structure and motivation of this study, in pursuit of understanding the stories told by deaf learners about their school experiences in the residential School for the Deaf in Swaziland. Beyond that, the study seeks to explore the dynamics affecting deaf learners in the school context, with a greater understanding of the spaces and places in which they inhabit. Finally, how the deaf learners negotiate the complex and varied spaces of schooling were revealed through careful navigation of the research process.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) further emphasize that the qualitative research seeks to understand a social situation from participants' perspectives. This often occurs through the researcher's participation to some degree and the lives of those persons which in this case, are the deaf learners. Thus, significance is drawn from valuing the specific experiences and personal narratives of those participating in the study, rather than on large statistical representations as seen in quantitative research. This study employed that qualitative approach achieved through using photo voice, individual interviews and focus group discussion.

Significance can be further reached through using the inductive analysis method of research. Here, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) state that this is a process through which qualitative researchers synthesize and make meaning from the data, starting with specific data and ending with categories and patterns. Understanding the narratives presented and data collected through their own specific lens and meanings.

It is hoped that the findings of first research question exposed children's experiences and constructions of geographies of slow learners. In answering the second research question, the study revealed the dynamics affecting deaf learners in schooling context. In answering the

third question, the study revealed the spaces and places of deaf learners in a schooling complex and in regard to the last research question; the findings also showed up the navigation styles of the complex and varied spaces of schooling. This study utilized the inductive process, thereafter; analysis involved identifying broad categories related to the key research question of my study.

Face-to-face interaction with the deaf learners when narrating and using participatory techniques which are child centred and child-friendly made this study very meaningful and the geographies of deaf learners to be known (Van Blerk, 2005). In the light of the above, the engagement of this nature presented an opportunity for further research in the creation of schooling environment that promoted learning for all deaf learners. The importance of this study was that it would help to develop policies, and encourage education reform for deaf learners in special education in Swaziland.

Furthermore, it was anticipated that through this study, means would be done to address the current issue regarding the external examination paper for the deaf learners. As the school and the examination council seem to be in a stand-still, it is unclear what conclusions will be drawn, or what the end result will be. Currently, students are not writing any external examinations, which limit their ability to move forward academically, as they cannot enter the academic path of the high school (thus entering form 5) without taking the external examination. This study would allow the government to see the need of having a deaf professional working alongside the exams council to assist the creation of an examination that caters to the needs of deaf learners (such as adapting the examination to meet the spatial and visual skills of the students, and make appropriate use of sign language).

1.8 STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

This study is organised in five chapters.

Chapter one: This chapter served as the introduction to the research, which entails the following: introduction to the chapter, aims and rationale of the study, the research questions, background to the study, the geographical and social economic context, and significance of the study, definition of terms and finally, the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter two: Chapter two introduces relevant literature under the research topic '*The geographies of deaf learners at school for the deaf in Swaziland*', which is critically reviewed. In addition, main theories, concepts and frameworks surrounding the education of deaf learners as they navigate the varied spaces and places of the school context were discussed. This is witnessed in various sub-sections titled: understanding of deaf learners, models and types of deafness and, approaches to the education of the deaf. This is followed by the experiences of deaf learners in the schooling context, then the dynamics affecting deaf learners, as well as the spaces and places of deaf learners within education and how deaf learners negotiate varied spaces in the schooling context. Pen-ultimately the support mechanics by government, parents, teachers and schools is thoroughly evaluated. Finally, the conceptual framework for the study was revealed.

Chapter three: The chapter explains the significance of the research methods selected for the study. The purpose of qualitative research methodology was explored in depth, following the sequence of introduction, methodological issues, qualitative research, systematic theory, narrative inquiry, sample and sampling, policy context of the study, research participants, methods of data generation (individual interview, focus group interview, participatory techniques and photo voice), data analysis, validity and trustworthiness, limitations and challenges of the study, ethical issues and finally conclusion.

Chapter four: the collected data is presented and analysed. The data were collected through three specific methods, a photo voice project, focus group and individual interviews. The data analysis was done through coding, categorizing and creating themes. This information was presented and analysed under the emerging themes.

Chapter five: This chapter interprets and evaluates the findings of the study. This chapter also answers the sub- questions of the research. The interpretation and evaluation of the findings are discussed in the light of the current literature. A summary of the research findings and implication for my professional practice are included. A critical evaluation of the study and the research methods were included. The limitations of the study and further plans for research were also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2. INTRODUCTION

The study sought to explore the geographies of deaf learners at the school for the deaf in Swaziland. Major themes reflected in this chapter are the experiences of deaf learners at school, the dynamics affecting them within the schooling context and the spaces and places they must navigate and negotiate. The concepts discussed in this section depict the link between the various elements that influence the learners' in the school context, and their overall academic achievement. This is later merged with the attitudes and perceptions of the deaf learner's aptitude and how that is a reflection of the views and beliefs of the larger education system. In examining this, the chapter observes various perspectives on the types of deaf education and the importance of valuing Deaf Culture and Sign Language as a key component of that. In a system that ignores these two entities, deaf learners become automatically characterised and classified as "slow" learners, with lowered expectations as to what they can achieve.

To address the main objectives of the study, the chapter is organised to investigate the factors that contribute to a deaf learner's schooling environment. These consist of understanding the key policies that exist globally, regionally and locally. In addition to that, the views and perspectives that on the understanding of deaf learners, models and types of deafness (both medical and social and educational), and the approaches to educating deaf learners. Once these have been addressed, the chapter moved on to a discussion on the experiences of the deaf learners in the schooling context, and the dynamics that are affecting them. This is observed through the lens of understanding the geographies of deaf learners and how they negotiate the places and spaces that they inhabit in the school in environment. An overview

of the support mechanics (e.g. expectations of the government, the importance of early identification, etc.) also worked to illustrate the problems that have been identified on the ground. This is a valuable section, whereby the true circumstances of deaf learners and the variables that affect their education were scrutinized. The chapter concludes with the introduction of the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study, and a conclusion.

2.1 GIST OF THE STUDY

The central phenomenon of the study was the gap existing between educators of the deaf, and the deaf learners in Swaziland. The education system continues to be dominated and catered for the hearing majority, with no opportunity for deaf perspectives and experiences to be included in the development of teaching materials and curriculum. In the mainstream setting, it was observed that hearing teachers are able to understand the lived experiences of their learners who are also hearing. This is also true for those working in higher positions in the education sector. However, this is not true for teachers of the Deaf in Swaziland. As these teachers are hearing, or have lost their hearing due to medical complications later in life, they do not have the experience of what it is like to be a Deaf child in the education system in Swaziland. Despite this evident gap, deaf children are removed from the process of producing material or curriculum that will be used to teach them. The teaching materials acknowledge the learning needs of a hearing child, and do not recognise the lived experiences of deaf learners.

Imrie and Edwards (2007) reported that despite the use of varied approaches and methods to research and teaching, geographers have highlighted issues and problems in breaking down the (hierarchical) social relations of the academe. Similarly, Skelton and Valentine (2003) noticed that the potential exclusion of the voices of deaf people, in a context whereby

interviews with them are often conducted through interpreters. This all relates to better understanding the concept of deaf learners in the schooling context, and how they navigate the varied places and spaces that make up their environment. This is exhibited, and challenged in the literature that was incorporated in this study. However, while literature explores the various approaches to deaf education, whether it was in line with the inclusive education agenda, the literature is limited in studies that have looked specifically at incorporating deaf “voices” into developing teaching practices and teaching approaches in Swaziland.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING OF DEAF LEARNERS

Wyness (2003) defines children’s geographies as “*a branch of study within human geography which explores the places and spaces of children’s lives experientially, ethically and politically*” (p. 20). While this is true, it is important to know the education of deaf children, and how they learn, as they are frequently compared to hearing learners. Moreover, how can conclusions be drawn on the best methods to teach and philosophies to adopt in terms of the places and spaces they occupy. Maphanga (2014) cited Ansel (2009) arguing that normally children are not taken seriously and often than not are excluded in debates that will make their desires noticeable. This also rings true in the case of deaf learners. Perhaps it is wise for educators in the field of deaf education to contemplate the following questions: How does the one who controls the places and spaces of deaf education shape the educational outcome for deaf learners? Who defines the capabilities of deaf learners? And, how does this shape the philosophies implemented in educating the deaf? These are all essential questions to consider in order to understand better the agency and voice of the deaf learners, in terms of how their needs can be expressed, heard and catered for, despite the persisting language and cultural barrier.

Morojele and Muthukrishna (2011) revealed that voice and agency are crucial concepts in the new childhood studies. In addition Morojele and Muthukrishna also pointed out that voice refers “to group intentions, hopes, grievances and expectations that children look upon as *their own*” (p. 21) whereas agency, suggests that children are talented, independent and self-governing actors who can contribute to improving their lives. Maphanga (2014) concluded that the voice and agency serve as fundamental ideas of exploring children experiences in the various spaces and places they occupy, including the experiences of deaf learners.

Storbeck, Magongwa and Parkin (2009) observed the challenges faced historically by deaf learners in South Africa. In a brief span of time, the methods and even the form of sign language changed dramatically, thus shaping the education for deaf South Africans forever. They noted that ,

“The first school for the deaf in South Africa was established in Cape Town in 1863 by the Irish Dominican Order under the leadership of Bishop Grimely... It used sign language as a medium of instruction. Irish Dominican sisters used Irish signs and the Irish one-handed alphabet...The German Dominican sisters followed, bringing with them German signs and the two-handed European alphabet. Additionally, the German Sisters brought with them an oral approach to educating deaf learners, thus introducing South Africa to the modality debate” (p. 134-135).

This demonstrates that the hearing community decides for the deaf how they should learn. In the case of South Africa, each group that came practiced what they thought was best for deaf learners. This then lends the question, who is or should be the expert in deaf education? Deaf people have historically been disregarded in terms of whether they can decide what is best or how they would prefer to learn. Here, it displayed the diverse ways in which deafness has been constructed (by hearing people), known as the models of deafness.

2.2.1 Models and Types of Deafness

According to the Royal National Institution for Deaf People (RNID) (2000) there are two main kinds of deafness: conductive and sensorineural deafness. Conductive deafness is best understood as a situation where sound may not pass through either the outer or middle ear whereas sensorineural deafness is caused in the cochlea or the auditory nerve (RNID, 2000). It is further stated that sensorineural deafness is permanent, and can impact deafness in a range of degrees. In addition to that, audiologists classify deafness based on the number of decibels which measures the level of hearing loss. These are mild (24-40 dB), moderate (40-70 dB), severe (70-95 dB), and finally by profound deafness which is 95+ dB (Ratcliffe in National Deaf Children's Society, 2001).

There are various ways in which deafness can affect a child's development, including speech and language, and communication. Moreover, deafness may be found in either one or both ears, and can fluctuate throughout a person's life, and can be rendered mild, moderate or severe in degree, depending on the frequencies that a person can hear (RNID, 2000). Deafness is further classified by Singh (2004) where it is stated that it can be congenital, disease or trauma related, or through hereditary means. Beyond that, there are a myriad of factors that are impacted by deafness or hearing loss in relation to a child's intelligence. These include the age of onset of loss of hearing, severity of deafness, the child's intellectual ability, amount of pre-school training (Singh, 2004).

Thus, it is clear that due to the variety of factors, one cannot simply label all deaf children as "slow" or unintelligent, rather their full background and current capabilities need to be evaluated to better understand the degree to which deafness or hearing loss has impacted their academic aptitude. This is further supported by the RNID (2000), where it acknowledged that

the impact of deafness extends beyond the physical characteristics of hearing loss. The way that society, teachers and peer groups perceive deafness is crucial because negative attitudes and stereotypes have negative effects. These foregoing affirmations suggest that the stigmatization found in a deaf child's social environment can limit the ability of the teachers themselves to help a child reach their full potential. RNID (2000) further asserted that there is no direct correlation between deafness and intelligence. Thus, the normal range of intelligence is observed amongst deaf pupils and therefore teachers should maintain high expectations.

2.2.2 Medical model

Pamela Knight in "Issues in Deaf Education" (1998) entitled "Deafness and disability" identified a common way in which most hearing people perceive deaf individuals. This is known as the "Medical Model". Here, it theorizes that the principle focus of the medical model is to minimize the effects of deafness which is viewed as a deviation from the hearing norm, thus intending to correct the anomaly, in order to accommodate the deaf person into hearing society. In addition to that, Drake (1996) argues that the medical standpoint is that people are disabled because of their physiological or cognitive impairment. This complements the first statement, suggesting that deaf individuals require treatment or a cure in which their deafness can be cured. This perpetuates the idea that it is a negative thing to be deaf, and glorifies hearing as the norm. Drake (1996) observed that it is clear that the medical model has influenced the way in which teachers and educators as a whole look at deafness. Drake emphasizes that individual loss and inability contributes to the model based on dependency on the wider society which has impact on the identity of many disabled people. Therefore, it can be noted that perhaps one of the biggest barriers to learning for deaf pupils is not in fact their deafness, but rather, the way in which teachers and other educators

understand their “impairment”. Along with this, it is necessary to state that deafness is by no means uniform in nature, as briefly addressed above. Therefore, teachers need to understand when it comes to teaching deaf learners that the methods used to support their learning must also vary depending on the degree of a child’s deafness.

2.2.3 Social and educational model

In contrast to the medical model, the social model views the way in which physical or social barriers can impact deaf people’s access to places and spaces that are typically occupied by hearing people, and thus catered to a hearing world. Brisenden (1986) supported the idea that people with impairments are disabled by buildings that do not accommodate deaf learners resulting in a whole range of further disablements regarding their education, their chances of gaining employment, their social lives and so on. It is further emphasized through the social model that deaf individuals have been marginalized due to the concept of disability is in part a historical product of social forces, not merely a biological necessity and the realization that the disabled mode of living has value in its own right, even as the conditions that gave rise to disability are condemned (NationMaster.com, 2005). Similarly, there is the educational model, which also emphasizes looking at disabilities as a human rights issue, where hearing people place a label of disability on deaf individuals, creating and exacerbating deafness as something that should be amended.

The residential schools for deaf children provide an example for illustration. The residential schools, now largely nonexistent, served as vital link in the transmission of deaf culture and language. Deaf cultural values find abhorrent the dismantling of the residential schools since they were considered the best possible environment, the highest quality of life, which to acquire and enrich sign language fluency and pass on deaf cultural values that serve as tools

and solutions to challenges in a predominantly hearing world. Thus, it is clear that the social or cultural model of deafness deviates from the medical model in such a way as to view deafness as a culture with its own set of behaviours, values and a language in its own right.

Finally, in discussing what considerations teachers can make to support their pupils, RNID (2000) asserted that deaf learners in normal conversation will be difficult to hear especially in a busy school environment for children with a moderate, permanent hearing loss. These children specifically require more attention, and may benefit from the use of hearing aids. For other types of hearing impairment or degrees of deafness, other steps might need to be considered in order for them to have access to the same education as their hearing peers.

2.3 APPROACHES TO EDUCATION OF THE DEAF

These are the steps that can be understood as separate approaches to education of deaf pupils which are involved in school placement of the child by the parents. RNID (2001) acknowledged that deaf pupils use a variety of communication methods ranging from auditory-oral through to pupils whose preferred language is British Sign Language [BSL]. The auditory-oral practice or oralism places emphasis on the development of spoken language. It is understood as a general term used to describe approaches that do not use any sign language or sign component. In addition oralism makes use of a individual's residual hearing as a means to acquire spoken language. Interestingly, supporters of this method also expect deaf pupils to follow a similar process of language acquisition to that of hearing pupils (RNID, 2001). Watson in *Issues in Deaf Education* (1998) pointed out that the aim of the oral approach is to teach deaf children to speak so that they can communicate with their families and the rest of the members of the hearing community. Therefore, promotion of intelligible spoken language and the ability to understand spoken language are seen as primary goals of

oralism. This is seen as the foundation of their learning, and connects with the perspectives held under the medical approach, whereby the assimilation of deaf individuals into a hearing world is the ultimate goal.

Oralism is in contrast with Total Communication (TC), which looks to harmonize the use of sign, finger spelling or cued speech as a means for deaf learners to develop spoken language. Learners who use this approach require support from adults in order to achieve this style of learning. A component of this approach is Signed English. In this method every spoken word is represented in visual form. Here the signed version follows English word order. This is mainly used to support the teaching of reading and writing (RNID, 2001). This differs from that of Signed Supported English whereby only key words or concepts are signed to support the meaning of what is being said. Furthermore, RNID presents that Signed Supported English also follows English word order and is used as a means to support pupils in learning written and spoken language (RNID, 2001). In addition to these, Sign Language (SL) is also a method that falls under the TC approach. RNID characterizes SL as a method used in order for pupils to converse with other deaf people or communication support workers. Moreover, SL is considered to be the language of the deaf community as a complete and rich language. SL has a sign order and grammar which is different from the word order and grammar of English (RNID, 2001). This definition of SL links closely with the social or cultural construct of deafness. It also values SL as its own language.

Pickersgill in *Issues in Deaf Education* (1998) discussed another approach to deaf education. Pickersgill observed that the sign Bilingualism approach is used to meet the communicative and educational needs of deaf children. Bilingualism is a developing area in educational thinking and practice which uses both signed language of the deaf community and the spoken

and written language of the hearing community. Although similar to TC, it differs in terms of philosophy. In the case of bilingualism the goals are to enable deaf children to become bilingual and bi-cultural, and participate fully in both the hearing society and the 'Deaf World'. Thus, in a way moving one step further than TC, in which the goal of learning is not only for deaf pupils to acquire language (and in the case of TC this is spoken or written language), but also values Deaf Culture. Pickersgill also stated that deafness is not regarded as a barrier to linguistic development, educational achievement or social integration. Thus, the society should value the inherent richness of linguistic and cultural pluralism. Here, a secondary aspect of education is also learning ways to navigate between both hearing and deaf worlds, as well as value the languages used by each group.

2.4 EXPERIENCES OF DEAF LEARNERS IN THE SCHOOLING CONTEXT

Swinbourne (2010) from Britain stated that deaf schools are places where friendships are formed, where couples fall in love, where people take a journey from childhood to being an adult - much like any other school. Therefore, this reveals that there are many stories that can be told by deaf learners about their schooling experiences.

Accounts from the Texas School for the deaf (2014) indicates that in a special school there is treasure trove of people, events, information and fun. Jacob and Camenish (deaf students) testified about being in the school for the deaf. Jacob and Camenish cherished that classes are smaller, more intimate individual attention is part of their learning program and their educators are dedicated and understand the challenges that deaf learners face in their schooling. Jacob realized that the whole experience that makes one what he or she is and cultivate love and flourished academically it's a magic of being in the special school. On the same note, Camenish said on the first day at the special school from mainstream she quickly

found herself fitting in and she learned to express herself in the presence of people who cared about what she thought which was an experience she never thought of (Texas school for the deaf, 2014).

Similarly, Stewart (1993) revealed that it is within the walls of these special schools where many deaf children learn about being deaf. Stewart added that being deaf is a favourable condition from the lens of the deaf community. Therefore, special schools create an incredible space where acculturation and socialization can occur, along with enabling the full inclusion of all members of the school into one cohesive community. On another note Stewart further stated that it is perhaps more appropriate to refer to special schools as being integrated rather than segregated schools. Considering such institutions (special schools) as integrated is a step toward creating equality between deaf and hearing children in the society including schools. This is rather intriguing declaration, however, also addresses the issues that are constantly being debated in deaf education. There is a continuous argument on whether deaf students should be part of mainstream schools or must be in special schools (if they benefit more in special schools). This question leads to a further discussion on what “inclusion” really means. Acknowledging special schools as legitimate places where education can occur, it is fundamental to recognize that these institutions are important spaces where deaf culture is preserved and celebrated, rather than neglected or rendered inconsequential.

While the mainstream may view a residential school for the deaf as one that practices exclusion, as it inclusion is from the so called “normal” perspective. Peters, Rourke and Murray (1994) pointed out that for many inclusionists, the guiding tenets in the ‘normalization principle’. This is a principle of making available to disabled persons

conditions as close as possible to the norms and patterns of the mainstream society. The goal of the 'normalization principle' call for the abolition of special education as a means to: (i) enhance disabled students' social competence, and (ii) effect a change in attitude of teachers and nondisabled students toward children with disabilities. It is worth noting that, social acceptance rather than academic realization seems to be the primary measure of success in the 'normalization principle'. This is visibly problematic and falls in line with the medical model of deafness, as previously evaluated in the chapter. In this case, it appears that the goal of inclusion is not to ensure for equal opportunities for deaf learners in the school system. Here, it is as though the inclusion of deaf learners in a mainstream setting is meant only to benefit the hearing population, with the assumption that being made to feel "normal" will positively affect the deaf learners.

In contrast, Andima (2014) in an article about the Namibian Association for the Deaf (NAD) acknowledged the challenges that the organization is facing: the association's director mentioned that deaf special schools do not have sufficient equipment to promote visual learning yet deaf learners' teaching and learning are promoted by more visual cues. The director added that some teachers are not conversant in sign language and are not properly offered support to attain the full level of language proficiency. The director also mentioned that another challenge is that the teachers employed at these schools are not well-trained in sign language, which at times makes communication impossible, because appointed teachers have to shift from spoken language to Sign Language. This is rings true when the appointed sign language interpreters are not well-experienced and make daily learning cumbersome to the learners. Furthermore, the director bemoaned that the national examinations are issued without any arrangement for the deaf pupils. In some cases, the deaf pupils are sits for examination on a syllabus that they have not learnt.

It can be argued that the educational system is a replication of the larger views held by society towards particular things, as it is the centre for acculturating and socializing learners to be appropriate citizens in their country. The experiences faced by deaf learners often resemble the experiences they face outside of school, when interacting with members of the hearing world. For example, if learners are faced with teachers who are not conversant in Sign Language, or have negative attitudes towards deafness, this most likely stems from the beliefs shared by members from a larger community, and more frequently dictates the policies and practices that are witnessed at the schooling level. Zikhali (2014) noted that Deaf Swazis are entitled to the same right as any other Swazi. When information is not provided in Sign Language, deaf people are not able to participate equally in society. This is carried into the experiences of the learners at school, because often information is first presented orally, and then later translated through the use of an interpreter. While this tactic works to spread information, students rarely learn information directly through sign-to-sign conversation. Madden (2010) further emphasizes that the choice of communication is a big question for everyone. It is believed that if you deny children access to British Sign Language (BSL), you deny them access to the deaf community. We think children need to develop a sense of their deaf identity.

The importance and value of sign-to-sign communication is emphasized in Stewart (1993) where he recognizes that:

“Except for the usual supervision, they [deaf learners] were left to themselves during the evening and weekends, and dormitories became the headquarters for the evolution of a Deaf Identity. In this situation, the supervisors were the crown jewels as they shared with students’ stories of their own experiences... and generally provided moral and educational support to assist students as they learned to live away from home and assimilate a wealth of Deaf cultural experiences” (p. 161).

Furthermore, Madden (2010) acknowledged that deaf schools are the best option for deaf learners. In deaf schools, deaf children can see deaf adults who are successful. They get

taught in small classes with their peers by a fluent signer who is very aware of their needs. This supports the significance that deaf role models can have for the students in helping them reach their full potential and access valuable parts of not only education, but socially as well.

Given these implications on the challenges that deaf learners may face within their schooling experiences, it is interesting to consider what Porter et al. (2012) noted about the way in which adults may mediate the learner's voices. This is a sentiment that typically carries negative undertones, however this can be remedied through contemplating not just in how young people construct their experiences but how their experiences are constructed when looking at the experiences of learners through the formation of their own perspectives. Thus, it is imperative to look beyond the stories, of the deaf learners, to what factors may have contributed to developing their perspectives and experiences within the schooling context. This will provide deeper insight into the dynamics affecting deaf in their learning, as well as how they negotiate this particular setting, as indicated in the remainder of this chapter.

2.5 DYNAMICS AFFECTING DEAF LEARNERS IN THE SCHOOLING CONTEXT

2.5.1. School-based factors affecting deaf learners

The American Speech- Language-hearing Association (2013) identified that language deficit causes learning problems that result in reduced academic achievement which result in learning. Singh (2006) concurs with the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association that intelligence of the deaf learner is generally lower than that of a normal child. Johnson, Liddell and Erting (1989) revealed that deaf learners' results were markedly depressing in spelling, paragraph comprehension, vocabulary, mathematics concepts, mathematics computation, social studies and science.

A consequence of an oral education is that the values of a hearing society cannot be imposed on the deaf population. Oralism is an example of what happens when a hearing society maintains a stranglehold on the deaf population. Oralism and the society are alike in the way they treat deaf individuals: Oralism and the society do not fully recognize the precedence established by the values and standards of the deaf community (Stewart, 1993). Here Stewart articulates the challenges that are often apparent within a deaf school, as educators continue to discuss the various methods through which learners should be taught. Often, Sign Languages as one of the key assets to deaf culture suffers under the assumption that it further excludes deaf individuals from participating in a hearing society. However, the very act of discarding the first language of deaf learners negates their experiences and extinguishes their voices.

Furthermore, Madden (2010) observed that teachers like the parents of the deaf children are still faced with wide-ranging debates about the best way for deaf children to communicate. This clearly indicates the complex dynamics that exist with the schooling context for deaf learners. Moreover, Madden noted that if a child is born without the ability to hear, decisions taken when they are very young about their education can dictate almost everything about the way they live the rest of their life.

Another issue facing deaf learners is the varying beliefs shared by teachers and parents regarding their deafness and the abilities that are associated with this perceived disability. Braswell-Burris (2010) attributed the differing assumptions between parents and teachers to be the reason a deaf learner may struggle academically. Any distinctions between the beliefs and attitudes shared by the parents or the teachers may further complicate the way in which a child accesses education and thus language. While teachers who are trained in Deaf

Education may understand and value the use of sign language as a medium of communication, parents may feel differently, and encourage the deaf learner to use other modes of communication while at home, and thus discouraging the use of Sign Language.

2.5.2 Home-based factors affecting deaf learners

Braswell-Burris (2010) revealed that deaf children born in homes where they have access to the visual language from their families such American Sign Language acquire that language (Sign Language) at the same rate that hearing children of hearing parents acquire spoken language. Braswell-Burris (2010) further argued that since, non-deaf children enter school with age-appropriate language skills, are well prepared to develop literacy skills in a second language, such as English Language. Unfortunately, most deaf learners are not provided such opportunities to develop language at an earlier age, and often enter school with limited language acquisition. Moreover, it is highly likely that a deaf child's first exposure to language will not be visual or sign language but rather a fragmented model of the spoken language from the hearing parents. Consequently, a cycle of language difficulties for children with hearing loss is perpetuated (Braswell-Burris, 2010). Therefore, deaf learners often enter school with a communication gap, and thus struggle due to the lack of having a strong knowledge of their first language.

2.6 Spaces and places of deaf learners within education

Deaf learners need to be afforded spaces and places in the school. Goodfellow (2012) defines a space as "a realm without space" which is an area of activity, interest or knowledge. The space is central to the construction of disability in a schooling context, and this statement rings true when looking specifically at the School for the Deaf Primary in Swaziland. Space and the resources located within that physical space have been created to meet the needs of

deaf learners at the school, but are also affected by the beliefs, attitudes and assumptions shared by those within the existing space. It has been revealed by studies that schools have become a site of power by the dominant group and authorities (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011). In other words, decision-makers have the ability to influence the dynamics within that space. Ngcobo and Muthukrishna further pointed out that deaf learners are oppressed, homogenized with children having disabilities and are labelled with names. In this scenario, powers are recognized in the hearing minority that acts as the administrative body of the school, while the learners (the deaf majority), are often excluded from the decision-making, although it impacts their lives.

Similarly, Stewart (1993) indicated that deaf learners have been told that being deaf in a hearing world carries with it a host of disadvantages, that in order to succeed, they must conform to the standards and values of a hearing world, but for many deaf students the capacity to conform is hindered by communication and language barriers and later by inadequate education. Whether intentionally dictated, or subconsciously passed on, this presents a rather complex issue that needs to be carefully unpacked. On the one hand, it is clear that the conversation around how the hearing majority (and most commonly those who do have decision-making power) perceives and navigates deafness needs to be reinvented. While there is an intense pressure for deaf individuals to behave, and pass in society in a very specific way, the ways in which this can be achieved remains inaccessible.

The ideology treating deaf learners as normal perpetuates the notion that all deaf individuals should be mainstreamed in schools and therefore wants to be, hearing, which minimizes the other elements that construct their social identities. Furthermore, this completely renders deaf individuals permanently dependent on hearing people, as a necessary resource for how they

can successfully navigate the world. It forces deaf learners to take a passive role in their lives, while shifting the responsibility on hearing individuals to properly provide assistance for them to conform. This is the same maddening mindset that suggests that, “*A fish can successfully be taught to fly, while completely overlooking the powerful ability of the fish to swim*”. This is the very reason that the learners at the school for the deaf are rendered “slow”, because they are being taught by teachers who are not conversant with Sign Language, while the students themselves are also not able to communicate in a language familiar to the teachers.

This is further affected by the use of languages within this particular context. While the medium of teaching is Swazi Sign Language, as this is the first language of the deaf learners, teachers enter the school frequently with limited knowledge or background in deaf education or Sign Language. Thus, students find themselves further excluded, as the information tends to trickle down to them, rather than through direct means of communication. Braswell-Burris (2010), noted that “the less deaf learners were able to communicate, the higher the level of frustration” would occur. Additionally, some of the deaf learners described feelings of loneliness and sadness at home and at school as they struggled to express their thoughts, wants, needs, and feelings (Braswell-Burris, 2010). Thus, while the space is occupied by a majority deaf population, the linguistic and academic space is often controlled by the hearing community, further impacting the deaf learners’ experiences at school and at home. Therefore, even though deaf learners are a part of the school community, there are limitations placed on their experiences due to the language barrier and attitudes associated with the use and fluency of Sign Language.

Finally, Stewart (1993) agreed that deaf people are acutely aware of their position in society and the contribution of the education system to this role. This awareness is translated by many deaf adults into bitterness, which is compounded by their lack of influence in education decision-making processes. In observing the behaviour and reactions of deaf learners at the school, it is clear that they experience a wave of emotions in relation to their positionality within the schooling context. As noted, the continuous and unbroken use of Sign Language is often an afterthought, which leads to excluding deaf individuals from the conversation, and thus removing them from being in the position to influence decisions based on their own feelings and experiences. Moreover, even with the use of an interpreter, there is an information lag, that often leaves deaf individuals playing catch-ups. There is an overall ability to remain flexible, however, every once in a while certain circumstances act as catalysts, creating a tipping point, wherein deaf learners lose patience, and become resistant to assist in letting hearing people into their world. This is marked by an inability for them to understand, navigate and share their own identities and culture with people outside of their experience.

Children especially are often viewed as unable to provide insight and knowledge into their own experiences and how to remedy some of the aforementioned issues. Porter, et al. (2012) acknowledges that there has been a gradual move in social science away from seeing children and young people as mere 'objects' of research to point where they are viewed as social actors in their own right. This is significant, especially in the case of deaf learners, given the stigma that is strongly associated with their cognitive and social abilities, often stripping them entirely of any agency or whatsoever. Wyness (2003) builds on this understanding by admitting that there has been a trend in recent years of schools considering student opinions upon making educational decisions. Wyness also observed that there is a danger that the

theory of practice of citizenship become co-modified through the language of ‘assessment’ and ‘target setting and moreover, that there are grounds for thinking that the treatment of school pupils as citizens creates pressures within schools to incorporate them within the political structures of the school at some level. The concern is that this idea of learner citizenship becomes burdened by a focus on achieving a specified quota, rather than the actual implementation of their voices, and the outcome within the school.

The incorporation of students into this political space initiates an opportunity for them to potentially weigh in on the decision-making process on factors that affect their lives. However, there is a hint of apprehension painted into this description that suggests the school administrative bodies are unsure of the effects this may have within the school. This is supported by the Office of the Child’s Commissioner “Invitation to Tender (2014), where the vision is clearly stated that “*A society is where children and young people’s rights are realised, where their views shape decisions made about their lives and they respect the rights of others*” (p. 2). Thus, there is a need to establish areas within society that seeks to validate the experiences of the children living within that particular sphere.

At the same time, Wyness (2003) is concerned with the notion that the granting of citizenship is often merely symbolic, rather than providing the students with any significant power in the grand scheme of things, and that their ability to participate becomes overshadowed by administrative concerns to appear as though they are open to hearing students’ opinions, while actually unable to give students’ a real platform to affect change within their community.

2.7 DEBATES ON HOW TO ACCOMMODATE DEAF LEARNERS IN A SCHOOLING CONTEXT

Pepper (2007) explored methods used to assess deaf learners. Pepper provided an example from South Africa, whereby examination papers were modified as such so that the language is more accessible. However, the study acknowledged that the content is not different from that of the mainstream paper. Similar provisions have been made in Lithuania, where teachers are also permitted to assist deaf and hearing impaired/partially deaf pupils when they take an examination. Bleckly (2014) mentions that if children do not receive stimulation to the auditory nerves during the early formative years (preferably before age of two) then the child experiences the communication and language problems which in turn affects the socio-emotional development which adversely affect the psycho-educational development.

However, the stimulation of auditory nerves remains a challenge at the School for the Deaf in Swaziland. The curriculum continues to be geared towards mainstream schools and the hearing community, whereas it would be beneficial to the learners for elements of deaf culture to not only be part of the curriculum from preschool through high school, but be reflected in how decisions are made in the school environment, and beyond the classrooms (such as in the hallways, lunchroom, and playgrounds) as well as in the residence and at home. Thus, deaf learners adopt a variety of strategies aimed at assisting their learning within the school. Many are able to vocalize certain words and phrases in both siSwati and English, and are thus able to partially communicate with non-signers. Moreover, they frequently seek advice and assistance from other students who may understand and comprehend the learning material, and are thus able to access the information through being tutored.

Holt (2003) and Parr and Butler (1999) examined how social and learning environment within school are not merely spaces but rather functions to construct students with learning disabilities tied to cultural identity, which is sense of place and this sight of power by authorities. If the teachers constantly see the deaf learners as disabled, they will project this belief on to the students and then, the students start seeing themselves as others, different and disabled. This is viewed in the rhetoric of the students who constantly refer to themselves and their classmates as “the deaf” and then ascribe particularly patterns of behaviour and stereotypes to themselves based on the beliefs shared by the teachers and staff. A solution to this issue may be found in strategies adopted by certain special schools in London. In this country the deaf schools have a specialist curriculum to help children overcome their difficulties. This involves teaching children how to express their emotions (Madden, 2010). This depicts that options for supporting deaf learners and encourage the adoption of deaf culture and sign language are represented in other parts of the globe, and have the potential for success.

Cohen (1994) produced an article against the full inclusion of deaf individuals in mainstream schools. Basically the concept of full inclusion is on negotiating identity and perpetuating notion that all students should achieve the “norms” and “patterns of mainstream society” rather than working to accept the students as they are, adapting materials to their different talents and abilities. Going back to the curriculum, which is holding expectations that deaf learners meet the standard of mainstream learners, completely disregards the unique giftedness of all learners regarding their deafness.

Cohen (1994) passionately addressed the major flaw existing in the way in which inclusive and special education are understood and implemented. Cohen noted that social acceptance,

and not academic realization, appears to be the primary measures of success in schools. Cohen also argued that those that expose “normalisation principle” as rational for all inclusion for all deaf learners, simply do not understand the role of the language and culture shared by most deaf learners and do not see it as a separate culture with its own beliefs and values. Thus, he passionately concludes that to treat all children as though they are the same is not democracy but injustice.

Porter et al. (2012) stressed the importance of working “from the base of pre-existing power dynamics to *extend* the agency of the groups, rather than trying to ‘flatten’ its power dynamic. By navigating the existing power dynamics within a school administration, it acknowledges the systems already in place, try to negotiate the space for other groups, here, especially deaf learners, to find a platform within this strict context. Rather than ignoring the potential of deaf learners, their agency needs to be accepted and entered into the political sphere of the school in such a way that their potential be developed according to their capabilities.

Porter et al. (2012) further suggested that granting participation to students does not necessarily translate to ensuring their agency and empowerment. Instead, there is a legitimate concern that the political complexities within a specific context may shape the way in which the deaf learners navigate and negotiate their particular experiences within the school. Porter et al. noted that this so called recognition of the students’ voices may in fact merely be representative of “looking good on paper”, rather than supporting the actual beliefs that the students deserve to have a role in decision-making. Therefore, student participation can actually be extremely harmful to the learners if not carried out in such a way as to accommodate their concerns and take their matters into consideration.

Furthermore, Wyness (2003) purports that it might be difficult to square any classroom debates on democracy with an education system that denies children any channels through which they might influence decisions taken at classroom and school levels. This is extrapolated further through his conclusion that there is often a level of “social disorder” associated with democracy in schools. Wyness also noted that children in the rush to exercise their ‘democratic rights’ create noise and disruption, in the process undermining the didactic authority of the teacher. They want and need to grant learners democracy is often contradicted by the understanding that adults themselves are responsible for maintaining social order, and exercising decision-making, as they are in most cultures understood as full of wisdom and knowledge. The notion that the authority of educators may be undermined by the agency of the learners is a key element in investigating the way in which the deaf learners navigate and negotiate this particular space. Tisdall and Punch (2012) related that children should be perceived as social actors and holders of rights rather than seeing them as passive and dependent on the private family.

2.8 SUPPORT MECHANISMS

2.8.1 Expectations of the government

The National Children’s Policy of 2008 in the Kingdom of Swaziland explores the rights of the child. Section 4.1.3. acknowledges that “*Children with special educational needs face more barriers to learning due to a number of factors... these include the lack of early identification and intervention services, skilled teachers, appropriate and adequate infrastructure and equipment, relevant and quality curriculum and resources*” (p. 25-26). Therefore, the above factors act as perfect examples of areas in which the government can provide support.

2.8.2 Early identification and intervention

For better education for the deaf government has to see to it that deafness is identified as early as possible. It is recommended that identification occur as early as birth, but critically within the first 6 or so months. In the emergence of early screening programmes in other parts of the globe, more babies are diagnosed with deafness or hearing loss earlier than ever before (Des Georges, 2014). Moreover, Des Georges encourages the importance for children who are deaf or hard of hearing to be identified as soon as possible. This emanates from the fact that research has shown that children who are diagnosed early and receive intervention prior to six months of age have significantly better receptive language, expressive language, personal social skills, personal-social skills, receptive vocabulary, expressive vocabulary and speech production (Des Georges 2014). Finally, and perhaps most importantly for those firm believers of the medical perspective, language development of children who are early-identified and receive early intervention services do not differ by degree of hearing loss, from mild through profound. Research indicates that parental stress levels are significantly lower when children are identified earlier, compared to later identification (Des Georges, 2014). In addition, Des Georges reported that it has been shown that the benefits of early identification and intervention can be demonstrated from 12 months of age through seven years of age. This is echoed by Woll (1998) in an article entitled *Issues in Deaf Education* where he comments that

“Sign language can be learned by deaf children at any age. Although there are no measurable differences between children exposed to sign language at birth and those exposed to sign language 2 years onwards... it has been demonstrated that later exposure results in incomplete mastery of grammar. Children who have not acquired fluency in a first language by the age of 5 do not subsequently catch up, either in a signed or spoken language” (p. 65).

Diagnosing deafness early in children for better performances there are steps that have to be taken before the child is admitted to school. Moreover, identification of a deaf child is time

sensitive, insofar that it can dictate a child's future linguistic success. This is demonstrated by Lang (2002) where it is stated that the issue of early intervention and academic preparation in elementary and secondary programs have an undeniable direct bearing on the academic success of deaf students in higher Education. For as long as colleges and universities are unable to effectively assist elementary and secondary school professionals and parents of young deaf children during the critical early school years, post-secondary programs will be doomed to post-hoc, band-aid programming.

This is a critical perspective on the long-standing issues that face deaf education and educators. While teachers may be rendered "qualified" to teach the deaf, if the attitude they hold towards their students remains negative or depreciating Sign Language and deaf culture, the situation cannot be remedied. Attitudes and beliefs are internalized in such a way that they can hinder the learning of the deaf, because they influence the behaviour and decisions made by the teachers towards the learners.

2.8.3 Curriculum

According to Pickersgill (1998) in *Issues in Deaf Education* the learning needs of deaf children are recognized as different from those of hearing children. Decisions about linguistic support, access to the curriculum and relevant assessments should be based on strengths and not the perceived weaknesses of the children. Pickersgill further extrapolates that both Sign Language and English Language should be languages of instruction and subjects of study. Therefore, curriculum should respond to the linguistic and cultural pluralism of society. Similarly, the development of curriculum-based signs should be done by, and in consultation with, deaf people for both Sign Language and English. The development of Sign Language and English usage should be in accordance to the child's preference, and the rights of deaf learners should be observed.

In addition to that World Federation for the Deaf vehemently argues for the rights of the deaf child. They argued that:

“Like all children, deaf children must have access to equal and quality education. Deaf children have the right to expect that their needs and human, linguistic and educational rights are respected and supported by educational authorities, in full compliance with international policy statements, national education, national legislation and national curricula” (p. 1).

2.8.4 Staffing

Government should consider the staffing at schools when it comes to Deaf Education. It is argued by Pickersgill in Issues in Deaf Education (1998) that all staff should be bilingual and deaf staff with native Sign Language skills be employed. This concurs with Ridgeway (1998), where she notes that deaf learners’ well-being depends upon the skills and experiences of qualified and trained deaf people. This people should provide a range of skills and expertise to help meet the various educational and mental health needs of the deaf population. However, it is also pointed out that persons skilled in English should be present at the schooling setting as well, in order to help achieve the mission of bilingualism. Moreover, in-service training should be provided to enable all staff to work collaboratively within a sign bilingual setting, thus staff are provided an opportunity to specialize in this particular field and become onboard with a different forms of teaching and interacting with learners. In terms of special schools for the deaf, all teachers should be trained as a teacher of the deaf.

England has a special post for the Office of the Children’s Commissioner, which plays an important role in the advocacy and protection of children in the United Kingdom. The Invitation to Tender (2014) stated that the Children’s Commissioner has a duty to promote the views and interests of all children in England, in particular those whose voices are least likely to be heard, to the people who make decisions about their lives. One of the Children’s Commissioner’s key functions is encouraging organisations that provide services for children

to operate from the child's perspective. Such a post could greatly benefit deaf children, as it emphasises the need of valuing children's opinions.

2.8.5 Educational settings

Pickersgill (1998) in *Issues in Deaf Education* revealed that current provision for deaf children is organised within a range of mainstream and special schools. Within the mixed economy, of placements that currently exist, the conditions for bilingualism can only be met in specific educational settings. This balance of languages can be challenging for hearing children, who are not fluent or conversant in Sign Language, which makes sign bilingualism perhaps more appropriate in a special school for the deaf, where both languages are placed on the same scale.

2.8.6 Contributions from the parents

Ridgeway in "Issues in Deaf Education" in (1998) admits that

"Much of the emphasis on the view that there is a psychology of deafness probably stems from a failure to recognise that most of the difficulties that deaf children experience within their non-deaf and deaf families result from a number of external factors, such as lack of guidance and support, lack of access to awareness of deaf issues, deaf community, culture and deaf role-models" (p. 19).

In this case, one step that parents could take is to seek advice and guidance from other deaf parents, or members of a deaf society in order to gain access to information on how best to support their child. This support can assist in positive development of the child not only academically, but psychologically. Ridgeway (1998) continues to say that issue of ego development in deaf children has been of interest in relation to language development. For example, there is some evidence indicating that deaf children are relatively passive and immature emotionally to their hearing peers this could perhaps be remedied if the appropriate role models such as deaf adults were present to counsel the parents on how to care and communicate with their children. Powers in "Issues in Deaf Education" of (1998) insists that

“A number of studies in the USA have looked specifically at family social-psychological influences on the achievements of deaf students. Those factors reported as being associated with high achievement include parental expectations, fluency of communication in the home ‘adaptation to deafness’ (which included acceptance of the deaf child and a positive orientation to the deaf community) and ‘press for achievement’” (p. 232).

This explains the significance of parental and familial involvement in the upbringing of a deaf child, which essentially maintaining the role of caretaker, but acknowledging and accepting the language and culture of the deaf. Powers asserted that the connection that a parent has with their child, along with a few other traits, here classified as “global factors” can inform the academic success of a deaf child. ‘Global factors’ such as family income and family size along with social-psychological factors related to family functioning are further broken down into variables relating to parental behaviour, family environment and parental expectations, to name a few. Thus, parents should heed to what steps they can take to assist their child, while also working to offset any imbalances that may also exist that can lend to the deaf child’s achievement. This is granted by the U.S. Department of Education (1994) where it is stated that educators say that parents are a child’s first teacher, and in order for education to be effective, families must be involved.

2.8.7 Adjustments by the teachers

According to O’Connell (2007) educators must be sure that school age children who are deaf or hard of hearing receive instruction in age-appropriate, standard-based curriculum. Many children who are deaf learn best when instruction is provided by direct instruction by a qualified teacher of the deaf, who is proficient in Signed Language. First, this highlights an important point regarding a deaf child’s education. In order for them to have greater access to learning, it is beneficial to encourage early enrolment in school, as well as providing the necessary support (i.e. qualified and trained teachers of the deaf) to ensure further language acquisition. Marschark (2010) shared the same sentiments that there is a clear literacy

learning advantage for deaf children who arrive at school with age-appropriate language skills. Therefore, teachers of the deaf need to be cognoscente of the impact that they can have on the learning achieved by the deaf learners, depending on age-appropriateness of teaching, as well as the teacher's linguistic ability.

Beyond that, O'Connell (2007) concluded that educators must be sure that school age children who are deaf or hard of hearing receive instruction in age-appropriate, standard-based curriculum. Many children who are deaf learn best when instruction is provided by direct instruction by a qualified teacher of the deaf, who is proficient in signed language. O'Connell further supported the need for competent use of language or linguistic knowledge as a necessary component of teaching deaf learners.

2.8.8 Modifying text and teaching materials

Given the research on the impact of language delays of deaf children, it means that many deaf children remain behind their hearing peers in terms of vocabulary and language development. RNID (2001) made various suggestions that can be implemented in order to meet the needs of the deaf learner in the classroom setting. These include, but are not limited to:

“All materials presented in a written form should be differentiated to take account of a pupil's language level... where appropriate, make sure that the language used on worksheets does not get in the way of the pupil understanding the key concept or learning objective for the session, most deaf pupils will benefit from a clear list of key words and concepts covered in the lesson and used in written follow-up materials...some pupils will benefit from follow-up materials which allow them to express their understanding in amore visual/pictorial way... modify the text of books that form part of the topics or curriculum” (p. 51).

Therefore, a variety of measures can be taken to adapt materials in order to meet the differing needs of deaf learners. Moreover, as learning levels of deaf learners are not the same, so teachers can further arrange the materials according to their level of learning.

2.8.9 Teaching strategies

RNID (2001) described a series of strategies that teachers can adopt in order to meet the learning needs of deaf learners, according to their specific needs (whether they have hearing aids, cochlear implants, can lip-read, etc.). In addition, NDCS (2007) grants that teachers can watch out for signs of falling confidence and self-esteem on deaf learners. Teachers should not overload the child with too many oral instructions by letting a child concentrate on lip-reading for too long without a break as well as timetable lessons that require the most concentration to be held in the mornings.

Latest ways of teaching deaf learners

According to the latest research carried by the Saint Joseph University(2017),they have derived the most common educational approaches that include Bilingual-Bicultural whereby sign language is the only method used in classroom, Auditory/Oral which teaches English language through residual hearing and speech. Total communication that combines auditory and visual communication for instruction.

The modern techniques for student with hearing discovered by the Saint Joseph University comprises:-

- Proper classroom consideration: - Learners with hearing loss required a well designed acoustic classroom to accommodate the maximum sound production, little distractive noise, proper lighting for visuals and the instruct should be in a position of being viewed by every learner in the classroom.
- Use of an interpreter: - The incorporation of the interpreter in a classroom with deaf learners enables the easier translation of material especially deaf learners who started signing at an earlier stage from 3 years should have sign language included in their daily educational life.

- Assistive technical capabilities: - Educators of the deaf have been empowered by the development of tools to maximise auditory abilities to learners with some degree of hearing which includes:-
 - FM Systems which project sound from an instructor's microphone
 - C-print, which is a speech-to-text computer system
 - A speech synthesizer which converts a typed word into speech format.
 - Personal Implication Systems

The Saint Joseph's University also emphasises that for teachers of deaf learners, with the right adjustment to the classroom environment enriched with advanced teaching methods can mean the difference in the education and success of the deaf learners.

2.8.10 Attitudes and Expectations

The National Deaf Children's Society (2007) comments that

“In some areas, teachers, particularly teachers of the deaf, had very high expectations of their pupils. They had a positive view of deafness and a determination to support pupils do to well... However, there were also teachers who had lower expectations of their deaf pupils, and did not always expect them to achieve in line with national expectations. Teachers were not always clear in their assessments about whether pupils' progress was in line with their potential, and did not always look closely enough at underlying reasons for underperformance” (p. 14-15).

Therefore, the attitudes and expectations of the teachers can affect the experiences of the deaf learners, and so teachers of the deaf need to have an awareness of the various philosophies in teaching the deaf.

Beyond that the NDCS (2007) indicated that it is important for teachers of the deaf to work together to meet pupils' needs. Teachers for the deaf learners can collaborate in work that

need them to plan, coordinate and evaluate their contributions to pupils' learning. Moreover, tutorial support in primary schools is carefully planned so pupils do not miss out on any specific area of the curriculum and approaches to learning English language are adapted to take account of specific challenges for deaf pupils, and when pupils are sign users, make effective use of Sign Language as their first language (NDCS, 2007). Finally, the NDCS (2007) conceded that planned learning activities for deaf pupils receive the appropriate support to meet learning outcomes agreed in their Individualised Education Programmes (IEP).

2.8.11 Practices adopted by the school

Powers (1998) in 'Issues in Deaf Education' commented that in evaluating the performance of a school one needs information about how well pupils have progressed during their time there rather than simple measures of their final attainment. Here, it is being emphasised that deaf people are individual, because such evaluations call for an Individualised Education Programme (IEP) that can assist learners, as the teaching of the deaf is often an individualised experience.

The NDCS (2007) recognised the importance of keeping record of the strategies and methods that schools and teachers implement as a means to meet pupils' learning needs. It is further indicated that it is necessary to personalise the experiences, insofar that schools reflect on the progress that has occurred over time, and also where challenges have been met. Thus, by keeping track and monitoring the progress of the learners, schools can have a better grasp of reality when it comes to defining school-wide expectations for the learners. Otherwise, expectations may be set that are not within the reasonable scope of the learners' capabilities. Therefore, the school has to take time to create a well-planned and focus approach to develop

the deaf learners' skills, especially language, in order for pupils to have greater academic success (NDCS, 2007).

Furthermore, the World Federation for the Deaf, in an article on the Educational Rights of the Deaf Child (2013) indicates a plethora of areas that could be developed in order to enhance a deaf learner's access to education. They states that

“Deaf children who are in school are often in programmes that do not meet their needs, educationally, socially or emotionally. These include oral programmes that exclude the Deaf learner's right to visual access to education, professionals fluent in the sign language used by the Deaf community, and supportive, enriching and appropriate environments. Such programmes fail to meet the Deaf child's needs and goals, and are detrimental to the Deaf child's educational development, self-esteem and overall well-being” (p. 3).

Robinson and Maines (2006) support the significance and necessity of nurturing a child's self-esteem through introducing the idea of the “self-image”. Here, they acknowledge the role that the appropriate adults can play in building and cultivating a child's self-esteem.

Robinson and Maines (2006) advocated that:

“A child grows up with all sorts of ideas about himself, his abilities, attributes and appearance. These are acquired and influenced by his perceptions of how he is accepted and valued by the adults who care for him. This self-image goes with him at all time and influences what he does and how he behaves... The environment we create for a child must not re-enforce his feeling of failure, rejection and reminders of personal inadequacies” (p. 6).

This indicates that children can create their own self-images based on their perceived strengths and abilities, however, this can be easily altered depending on the environment that they are placed, whether positive or negative. This is further supported by the notion of “the ideal

self”. Robinson and Maines (2006) continue to state that, “the child forms an impression of the abilities and personal qualities which are admired and valued (p. 6). From these the child can compose a picture of the desirable person, an ‘ideal self’, the person the child would like

to be. Thus, depending on who surrounds the child in terms of role models can determine the ideal image that they have of who they believe they should be. Moreover, Robinson and Maines argued that children who have warm, affectionate relationships with parents have higher self-esteem even when they are relatively inadequate at specific skills. High self-esteem provides a child with the confidence to attempt difficult thing without an incapacitating fear of failure.

2.9 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF MY STUDY

The study was conceptualized on the basis of children's geographies, paired with the concept of deaf education and social constructionism. This is justified by the central phenomenon of the study, which looked at the gap present in the methods and approaches used to teach and interact with deaf learners, and the recognition of deaf voices in this process. Moreover, these concepts emerged when examining the relationships and activities that the children engage in the schooling context. These elements that make up the social experiences of the deaf learners play a crucial role in how they navigate this educational space. Maphanga (2014), in citing Mayall (2002) recognised that children should contribute significantly to the social order, and that this should be acknowledged.

The concepts deaf children's geographies and social constructionism acted as a guide through which the data collected in my study was analysed, understood and evaluated. This supported the aim of the study, which sought to explore how children navigate the complex and varied spaces and places of the school environment. In this, rests the paradox that blames the deaf learners for their poor performances, yet the education system lacks in understanding how the experiences of the deaf learners affect their learning. This marginalisation is amplified by Barker and Weller (2003) who reiterate that "*children are not simply passive objects*

dependent on adults, but are competent social actors that make sense of and actively contribute to their environment” (p. 207). This is paramount to my study, as deaf learners, due to the language barrier and their weaker academic records are often perceived as uneducated or unintelligent. In this sense, the deaf learners whom should be treated as the experts in their own education and development are marginalised. However, Sikhakhane (2015) theorized that dynamically, children create meanings of their world and must be afforded an opportunity to speak for themselves in any research about them.

In recognising this, the lived experiences of the deaf learners became central to my study and necessary in order to draw conclusions on the data that emerged. Tisdall and Punch (2012) supported the incorporation of children’s voices in decision-making. There have been close affinities to policies and practices, with mutual support between academic childhood studies and children’s rights. Of particular note has been the promotion of children and young participation in decision-making about their own lives and collectively which fits neatly within childhood studies’ interest in children and young people’s agency and the novelty of setting out children and young people’s participation rights within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Conversely, the issue of adulthood versus childhood is brought into question. Tisdall and Punch (2012) related that from constructions of children as ‘human becomings’ came arguments that children were not citizens and, further, they did not even have rights because they lacked: rationality, competence, needed protection not autonomy and must be socialised into ‘good citizens’. This correlates with what has been previously stated in this chapter in regards to Cohen’s (1994) normalization principle, whereby the goal of education for the deaf seems to have a greater emphasis on assimilating deaf individuals into a hearing community,

than utilizing the strengths and skills that deaf learners may have or are capable of acquiring. This same principle fuelled the wave of oralism that cascaded across the globe, countering and devaluing Deaf Culture. It is with this in mind that new childhood sociology meshes beautifully with the experiences of deaf learners in the educational setting, particularly when considering that deaf children are further discredited as experts in their own right, on how they best can learn.

Therefore, consideration could or should be made in valuing the voices and experiences of children as a way to inform people working with deaf children on how to structure or restructure the place and space within which they inhabit. This is conceded by Goodfellow (2012), where it is recognised that

“Places offer relational *experiences* that create meaning from space. Drawing from the theoretical concepts of *space* and *place* discussed previously, I argue in this section that the participants’ photographs are reflective of their *place* rather *space* within special education programming. Exclusion is not inherently to the special education classroom or curriculum; it takes root in material and social geographies that undermines the participants’ intellectual capacity or social status within the school” (p. 74).

This is particularly critical in the way in which “place” is emphasised here by Goodfellow. In this case, the intention seems to question the role of education for the deaf, rather a space for learning and critical engagement in academic material, but as a space where their social status as “abnormal” is exaggerated. Deaf children, in this way, experience exclusion in this setting more so than inclusion, because their experiences become invalidated by a lack of understanding about their so called “disability” and Deaf Culture. This is further compounded by Stewart (1993), as noted above, where deaf individuals become jaded when their experiences, knowledge and skills are dispelled, and not taken seriously as part of the transformative or decision-making process. It is another way in which they are controlled in

this particular setting, and cements them in their “place” in society, which is a reflection of the beliefs that hearing people tend to have on their capabilities.

Cohen (1994) further concludes,

Those who espouse the "normalization principle" as the rationale for full inclusion for all deaf children simply do not understand the role of the language and culture shared by most deaf persons. Contrary to the claims of those who champion "normalization," placement in a school setting that lacks appropriate communication with peers and adults creates an abnormal and impoverished milieu (p. 2).

Through the acknowledgement and exploration of these conceptual frameworks, the study was able to capture meaning through the experiences of the deaf learners, and provide them the platform for which they could address the issues and challenges they face in the schooling environment.

2.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed relevant literature from studies conducted internationally. These studies indicate the deaf children’s experiences and construction of deafness within particular places and spaces in the schooling context. Several articles cover the geographies of deaf learners and the importance of considering the voices of the children as a means to gather relevant and crucial information about their experiences and how that can further inform their education, as well as those instructed to teach on how best to teach the deaf learner. Moreover, it is clear that the government has to consider the education of a deaf learner, as indicated by the models of deafness, not as medically disabled, and not as compared to their hearing peers, but rather under the social or educational construction that sees deaf learners as people in their own right. The study was intended to play a key role in the dialogue on the significance of deaf learners’ experiences and their education, and schooling environment.

The literature revealed that there has yet to be a trend in research that looks at linking children's geographies and deaf education, and more specifically, a study of this nature is yet to be conducted in Swaziland.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this research was to interrogate the experiences and constructions of deaf learners in the school for the deaf in Swaziland. The study provided an understanding of the spaces and places of learners within schooling complex as well as the meaning they make of the dynamics affecting their learning in the schooling context, what barriers and challenges they face, and what causes them to be slow learners. Therefore, the primary objective of the study was to understand the complex ways in which deaf learners negotiate and navigate the varied spaces and places of schooling, and how they adapted and adjusted to meet their academic and social needs within the school.

A series of topics were examined in this chapter. The methodological issues, qualitative research, narrative inquiry, researcher positionality, and the design of the study were further explored under the following subheadings: the geographical and social economic context, research participants, individual interviews, methods of data generation, data analysis, validity and trustworthiness, ethical considerations, limitations and challenges of the study.

3.1 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) believe that the methodology serves as the guiding structure of research. Various data collection methods were utilized by the researcher during the research process, particularly the way in which the subject should be observed, critiqued, questioned and eventually understood. In light of the above chapters, there is a need for exploring the experiences of deaf learners, and incorporating these experiences into the

practices that will benefit the deaf children stated needs. This emerged through first investigating the theories around spaces and places of deaf learners in a special school setting, and was satisfied through the use of a photo voice project, interviews and a focus group.

True to the literature, the study adopted an interpretive paradigm. Cohen et. al. (2007) asserted that interpretive paradigm is characterized by a concern for the individual. In the context of the interpretive paradigm, the central endeavour is to understand the subjective world of human experiences. Interpretive paradigm seeks to retain the integrity of the phenomena being studied and efforts are endeavoured to get inside the person and to understand from within. This enabled the researcher to probe and get first hand experiences of learners, and really understand their perspective and how they navigated their world.

In addition to that, my epistemological view is rendered subjective as knowledge was obtained through interpretations made by individuals of their experiences. Furthermore, the researcher examined the social constructs within which these individuals were placed. This study explored the challenges that deaf learners face in balancing the individual perception of self as a deaf learner in Swaziland, and the perceptions held of them by the society in which they live. Ontologically, deaf learners are bound to a system that does not belong to them, but to the hearing community. This phenomenon positions people who are not capable of academic success, and as people who are underperforming. This was highlighted in the lack of recognition of their first language - Sign Language, and validation of their cultural norms, which differ from the hearing norms and values. My epistemological views coincided with Sikhakhane (2015) who claimed that: *“Children and young people are capable individuals*

who can speak for themselves about their experiences of social worlds in which they live” (p. 32).

The study is in line with ideology from Sikhakhane (2015) as the study sought to place the learners’ experiences as legitimate artefacts in the geographies of deaf learners. This particular view aligned with the research that was revealed in the literature review and is the lens through which the data was analysed. Themes emerged based on the theoretical perspective on children’s geographies and deaf education as noted from Chapter Two of this study. Through this, my study added to the field of research surrounding deaf education and children’s geographies. The research questions underpinning the study were: What stories do deaf learners tell about their school experiences in one school for the deaf in Swaziland, what are the dynamics affecting deaf learners in the schooling context?, what are the spaces and places of deaf learners within schooling complex? and, how do deaf learners negotiate the complex and varied spaces of schooling?

3.2 NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Maphanga (2014) indicated that narratives can be understood as “verbal acts” consisting of a discussion or dialogue of a person’s lived experiences between two or more individuals. Maphanga (2014) continued to state that as a research approach [narrative inquiry] provides an effective way to undertake the systematic study of personal experiences and the meaning of how the active participants have constructed events. As demonstrated above, understanding the lived experiences of the participants was the central focus of qualitative research: this was echoed by the tenants of narrative inquiry. Creswell (2012) acknowledged that the use of stories served as the gateway into understanding people’s experiences, and gain new perspective on the issues embedded in a specific community. This is further contended by Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) where they stated that lived and told stories and

the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities.

Through this particular method, the researcher focused on relating directly to the participants, and not on literature that exists on this topic (Creswell, 2012). This occurred through first acquiring knowledge of the participants' experiences and life-stories on a particular subject, and then later through the analysis of the stories where themes or categories of information, were located. These themes enabled the researcher to place the participants' experiences linearly, as a means to understand the factors that influence how they engage with the world around them.

Clandinin and Huber (in press) related that there are three commonplaces of narrative inquiry namely: temporality, sociality and place. Temporality is defined as recognizing the past, present and future of people, places, things and events under study (Clandinin & Huber, in press). Under this commonplace, it was imperative that the researcher reflected on how transitions over time may impact the narratives shared by participants, and that a person's life is always in transition. Finally, narrative inquirers need to attend to the temporality of their own and participants' lives, as well as to the temporality of places, thing and events (Clandinin & Huber, in press.).

The second aspect of narrative inquiry is sociality. Clandinin and Huber (in press) present sociality are social conditions understood, in part, in terms of cultural, social institutional and linguistic narratives. In addition to that, researchers need to be aware of the relationship present between the researcher and the participants. This was reflected in observing the personal experiences embedded in larger social situations and how these two factors interrelate. This was relevant to the experiences of the deaf learners, as their first-hand

experiences are inherently impacted by the decisions made on a larger societal level, including the attitudes, behaviours and beliefs shared by policy makers, teachers and parents in terms of how they view deafness, and how the deaf learners should be assessed within the educational setting.

The final “commonplace” explained by Clandinin and Huber (in press) is place. Connelly and Clandinin (2006), described that ‘place’ refers to the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place. Thus, the physical location had as much influence on the formation of experiences as the people or things that a person related to. Clandinin and Huber (in press), acknowledged that people’s identities are inextricably linked without experiences in a particular place or in places and with the stories they tell of these experiences. This was of particular importance because the experiences of the deaf learners were naturally affected by the place in which these experiences occurred—which shaped their identities. Thus, the lived experiences of deaf learners would be extremely different were it told from a mainstream classroom, instead of a school for the deaf and vice versa.

Another important aspect of narrative inquiry was witnessed in the notion of collaborating with the participants when writing the research study (Creswell, 2012). This approach was utilized in my study, whereby the participants guided how the study unfolded. Moreover, given the focus on extracting meaning from the lived experiences of the deaf learners, it was only logical to seek information through selected social scenes with dialogue with the overarching goal of telling the story from different perspectives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

In recognizing the significance of individual experiences, narrative inquiry also allowed the researcher to compare and contrast across groups within the culture (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This was of particular importance to this study as it allowed the researcher to better understand the places and spaces of deaf learners as they were always compared to their hearing counterparts, expected to perform the same, despite obvious differences, including their cultures. The need for critical data comparing and contrasting the hearing and deaf communities was evident in the expectations and teaching approaches utilized in classrooms by most teachers of the deaf, as well as the national expectations of the students' academic performances, yet did not reflect the attitudes and beliefs held by the deaf learners themselves.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3.1 Qualitative research

The study assumed qualitative methodology. Qualitative methodology is context free and was useful to in understanding the deep complexity of the participants. Qualitative methodology allows for deep immersion with the participants unlike quantitative methodology which is context bound. In qualitative methodology the researcher is attached to the participants (Baxter & Jack, 2008). While quantitative research placed emphasis on the notion of promoting objectivity as a fundamental aspect of science, which further contends that it is possible to answer research questions without bias invalidating the results. Qualitative research embraces potential bias, acknowledging it as “inherent” (Hughes, 1994). However, it was then the researcher's obligation to ensure that bias did not go unchecked. Given these perspectives, it is clear that qualitative research focused specifically on gathering descriptive data, achieved successfully through face-to-face methods such as interviews, focus groups and indirectly, observations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This sentiment is understood

by Cohen et al (2007) who acknowledged that a crucial part of qualitative research is witnessed in focusing on people's lived experiences, values, behaviours and personal perceptions centred on how they view and navigate the world. Interacting with a fewer number of participants helped to discover the various problems, namely, dilemmas, confusions, tensions and complexities that they experience within spaces and places of schooling. Goodfellow (2012) defined space as "a realm without space" which is central to the construction of deafness in this context; it was the schooling situation where it was an area of activity, interest and knowledge. In addition, deaf learners were not located in only classroom situation but from preschool through high school.

Similarly, Lekoko and Mukhopadhyay (2008) stated that qualitative researchers use the 'principle of inductive approach to indicate that meaning is embedded in people's experiences. Therefore, significance was located in seeking to understand the factors that impacted or influenced the experiences of the participants, and thus the way in which they perceived their academic and social interactions, and interact with the world around them.

Imrie and Edwards (2007) contended that the use of particular qualitative or interpretative methods were a preferred way of giving voice to disabled people's experiences, opening up scope for inclusive research practises. In this respect, there were some important methodological developments in geographical research that articulated the different ways that disabled people knew and experienced the world.

The researcher conducted this study because of the misunderstanding of the performances of deaf children as if they can perform at par with their hearing peers. Deaf learners were expected to follow the mainstream curriculum which has complex vocabulary, and then taking the same mainstream papers, that were designed and taken by hearing individuals, and has resulted in the deaf learners failing dismally. So the purpose of this study was to discover the geographies of slow learners, whether the deaf learners can truly succeed in following the same curriculum and paper as their hearing counterparts, and thus find the means to help them succeed academically. However, of great significance was the need to address the communication barrier that exists due to the language deficiency that most deaf individuals had due to late language acquisition, which was another justification for using the qualitative approach.

Given the relative layers embedded in the study, and the lived experiences of the participants, it was likely that the researcher will see different major characteristics of each stage of the research process as articulated by McMillan and Schumacher (2010). As there are several elements to this study (photo voice, focus group, and individual interviews), new information was extracted while it was being conducted, thus revealing deeper meanings behind surface-level problems. Considering the persistent language barrier that existed between hearing and deaf individuals, it was necessary to explore the narratives that were often neglected or otherwise ignored. This was further explored by Carlson (2010), where the notion of authority was called into question in relation to research. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) posed a question on: *“Whose knowledge claims are valued and accepted, and whose voices may be dismissed or absent? In what ways do assumptions about the very nature of ID [intelligence disability] shape the construction and assertion of authority?”* (p. 64).

These were all crucial questions to evaluate when developing a methodological approach for the study. In this study, the researcher needed to contemplate critically on the selection of participants, and how the data was evaluated and measured. If this was practiced carelessly, the experiences of the deaf learners would have been compromised and misinterpreted in such a way as to perpetuate the justification of power and authority granted to the researcher as an expert, undermining the authenticity of the participants' experiences and invalidating their perspectives. Nind (2008) asserted that qualitative research can assess the perspectives and experiences of oppressed groups lacking the power to make their voices heard through traditional academic discourses. Thus, the researcher held a significant degree of responsibility when it came to crafting and implementing a research plan. Nind later cautioned that researchers need to be aware of the challenges associated with partially giving voice to the participants in a research study. Understanding this, the researcher needed to ensure that specific narratives were not neglected or "tuned out" as a means to filter the data in a way that matched the hypotheses and positionality of the researcher, but rather, resembled and reinforced the authentic and genuine voices of those involved in the study, such as the deaf learners.

Hancock, Windbridge and Ockleford (2007) stated that qualitative research tends to focus on how people or groups of people can have different ways of looking at a social reality. This was further justified when recognizing that various individuals, or groups of individuals often shared different values, beliefs and behaviours. As in the case of the deaf individuals, the lack of qualified personnel who assisted in helping the learners develop important skills clearly indicated an area where the qualitative approach was best utilized and explored. The data collected from this study will assist in influencing policy makers and curriculum developers,

and thus hold great importance for people outside of the school setting to understand the deaf learners' potentials and challenges (Hancock, Windbridge & Ockleford, 2007).

Therefore, it was likely that the deaf learners desired a variety of social experiences whereby they had the opportunity to meet new people, and make friendships, however, because of the language barrier, this opportunity was frequently stagnated, and they were left unfulfilled, even in building relationships with people who should be naturally close to them, such as family members. This was supported by Nind (2008) where she concluded that people with communication difficulties when learning have something to say that is worth hearing and experiences that are worth understanding. This is making it important to pay attention to the methodological challenges involved in researching them. In this way, research played an integral role in providing a platform for deaf learners to expose their intimate experiences in ways that effectively drew outsiders' curiosity and interest in further understanding their situations and experiences that would otherwise be left unknown. With this in mind, the methodological strategies mentioned above were in line with the purpose underpinning this research, and held the intention to provide an opportunity for the "voices" of the deaf learners to reach an audience that has power to change the circumstances that they faced, and act as barriers to them.

3.4 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Sample is a smaller group or subset of the population selected from the population (Chiromo, 2009). In this study a sample of six learners (three females and three males) was purposively drawn from one semi-urban school selected. Selecting three females and three males ensured that gender balance was maintained in the nature of the data generated. They were purposively selected from grade 5 to grade 7. From each class a boy and a girl were selected.

Sampling refers to the procedure or criteria used to select the school and the participants of a study (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). This particular location (School for the Deaf) was selected because it was the only residential school for the deaf in Swaziland which catered for deaf learners. The researcher as a teacher of the deaf had the motivation to pursue this topic given her experiences while working at the school. Moreover, as this study aimed to explore the geographies of deaf learners schooling experiences of deaf learners at a special school in Swaziland, it is important to understand how the dynamics affected their school experiences, and how they negotiated the complex and varied spaces and places found within this particular environment, and how this influenced their academic performances. Thus, specific students needed to be selected to meet the above criteria, as well as those that were trusted to competently share their experiences in an understandable way. Chiromo (2009) asserted that in purposive sampling, the subjects were selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment of their typicality. This kind of sampling was used to select the school and participants that would yield the richest data related to the study.

The participants were recruited through their competence and fluency in sign language, and as recommended by the head teacher. Other selection criteria consisted of their age, class and cognitive abilities. All participants were selected from Grade 5-7, aging 14-19 years. The selection of the participants was in line with Marczak and Sewell (1999) who advocated that

focus group participants should be systematically and purposefully selected. Interview participants were the same participants that were used for the focus group, with the idea that the focus group built on topics identified in the individual interviews and develop greater discussion on the themes that emerged. Consent was requested from the parents of participants under the age of 18 at the start of the study. Only participants who had been granted permission from their parents participated, and those above the age of 18 years gave consent from the sample group (based on the above criteria). During the selection one was also mindful for students with a diverse economic and social background, and from single and double parent-headed households.

3.5 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Research participants were selected for the focus group and individual interviews. Marczak and Sewell (1999) noted that the purpose of the study should guide who to invite as well as the size, and the size of focus group participants tends to be between 5 and 10 participants. The participants consisted of six deaf learners, ranging in age from 14-19 years, in Grades 5, 6 and 7. They were all born from hearing parents and use sign language as their main means of communication. The learners were purposively selected based on their vocabulary, as well as the competence in sign language. Furthermore, they were behaviourally very easy to handle. Marczak and Sewell also remark that consideration should be made towards the homogeneity of the participants selected. By this they indicate that while participants will have differences, they should not be varied as would skew the results.

3.5.1 Methods of data generation

This study adopted a qualitative narrative inquiry approach. The qualitative methodology was different from quantitative analysis because it required the researcher to collect data by having face to face interactions with the participants (Creswell, 2003). This approach

required the researcher to examine people's individual and common society actions, values, views and perceptions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The researcher chose this approach because the study necessitated one to understand stories deaf learners told about their school experiences in one School for the Deaf in Swaziland. Eliciting stories told by deaf learners about their school experiences required face to face interactions with them. Learners' experiences were naturally informed by their individual and social actions, values, views and perceptions that prevailed in any given context. Narrative inquiry allowed the researcher to collect stories that participants told regarding their experiences of phenomena (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Therefore, in this study, narratives were useful to capture the subjective voices of the participants regarding the complex dynamics affecting the experiences of deaf learners in a school for the deaf.

3.5.2 Individual interviews

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) articulated that interviews act as oral questionnaires in qualitative research. Moreover, they involved direct interaction between individuals. For these reasons, it was understood that this particular method was adaptable and flexible and catered to the needs of the specific focus of the study. Within this, interviews remained usable to a variety of people, regardless of their literacy levels or knowledge base. However, a skilled interpreter was needed for the interview process in order to ensure that questions and answers between the participants were understood. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) further stated that the researcher needs to learn as much as possible from the participants about their perceptions of the nature and impact of the experiences. This element of the individual interviews was key, as it met the specific characteristics of the deaf learners. For example, some were shy in the focus group interview, and unwilling or unable to open up about their experiences in front of other colleagues. This also ensured anonymity in certain cases where

the deaf learners shared sensitive information about their experiences that they may otherwise not want their classmates to know.

Data generation involved the following personnel: researcher, interpreter, deaf adult, videographer, and a note taker. The interviews lasted for about hour. The interviews were used as a means to delve deeper into experiences, and why they chose the particular photos to represent their experiences at the school. Thus, the length of time was dependent on the willingness and ability of the participant to contribute, and express their opinions. The framework utilized to guide the interviews was of a semi-structured nature. According to Hancock et. al. (2007), the open ended nature of questions posed defines the topic under investigation also provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail. Therefore, through the use of interview method, more information was extracted from each interview than the researcher anticipated. Also the researcher could access more information than what was visible on the surface, which would have not been easy for the researcher to probe and interrogate further. Moreover, with the usage of the deaf adults, whose fluency allowed them to go deeper in terms of asking questions and understanding the responses, the students' discussions of their experiences were more clearly illustrated. In addition, the students also were more open to sharing the information through the deaf adults, because they understood them better. They then felt secured in the presence of the deaf adults who acted as their role models. This was further argued by Hancock et al. (2007) where they noted that a semi-structured interview allowed the interviewer the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate on an original response or to follow a line of inquiry introduced by the interviewee.

3.5.3 Focus group interviews

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that

“A variation of an interview is the focus group interviews that are used to obtain a better understanding of a problem or assessment of a problem, concerned new product, program, or ideas. By creating a social environment in which group members are stimulated by one another’s perceptions and ideas, the researcher can increase the quality and richness of data through a more efficient strategy than one-on-one interviewing” p363.

Here, in using the photovoice method as a foundation for the focus group, a social environment was created whereby the students had a common experience to reference and draw conclusions from. This encouraged easy dialogue, as the students were able to draw from their own examples. Lastly, all the students attended the same school, and shared in the same social environment; which eased any tensions that were naturally present in the focus group.

Although it was further acknowledged that a typical session averaged between 1.5 to 2 hours, in the case of the study of the places and spaces of deaf learners, the time frame for the focus group interview was significantly shortened - 30-45 minutes was the average class length. This was due to the fact that they were children, and had a shorter attention span. Additionally, the leader facilitated discussion by posing initial and period questions. The use of an assistant was also recommended, who then observed body language, tape or video records the session and assisted in interpreting the data. Bearing these strategies in mind, the researcher led in the facilitation in probing questions, however, through an interpreter to ensure that there was no communication barrier. Moreover, there was a note-taker to record key points, body language, and additional questions that arose throughout the discussion. Finally, a person was responsible for filming the focus group discussion. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) supported that the use of films and photographs of a current social scene

comprises visual techniques films are especially useful for validation, as they document non-verbal behaviour and communication and provided a permanent record.

Focus group questions were centred around the pictures that they took during the photovoice activity. Following the guidance of Goodfellow (2012), participants were probed on why they took certain pictures, as they described what they see, and what it represented to them. Wang (1999) concurred by recommending the following questions: What do you **See** here?, What is really **H**appening here?, How does this relate to **O**ur lives?, **W**hy does this situation, concern, or strength **e**xist, and what can we **d**o about it? These particular questions followed a framework that has the word “showed” embedded in the text. Thus, highlighting that evidence was to be drawn from what the participants can see themselves, that other viewers of the images did not visualize, due to their different experiences.

Wang (1999) recognized that the participants were likely to begin codifying the issues, themes or theories that arise from their photographs, so themes emerged naturally throughout the discussion as the individual experiences of the deaf learners became linked with their classmates.

3.5.4 Participatory techniques

There were several evident participatory techniques being used in this study, as noted above. These included the photovoice project and a focus group interview. Participants were encouraged to take active roles, and be key players in identifying the issues found within the school community. In this study, the researcher drew upon the knowledge of the participants as a means to guide the research and the outcome of the research. The first step was

acknowledging and agreeing on a common problem. In this case, the common problem was: understanding the factors that made learning difficult for deaf learners. Once this was identified, there was a need for the participants to identify the causes of the problem, brainstormed ways in which these causes could be solved, and devised a plan to see that the issue could be overcome as suggested by Creswell (2012). The problems relating to the deaf learners at the school and in the hostels was revealed through the photovoice method, whereby the learners captured images of the factors that made learning difficult, or set out to identify the problems they faced. These pictures were used in the focus group to help probe further discussion, along with other questions that were presented. From these questions, the students were able to go deeper into the causes of the problems, and were guided to suggest ways in which these issues could be addressed, thus moving towards solution-generating.

3.5.5 Photo voice

Disposable cameras were given to the participants where they took pictures of their school experiences, including the life at the hostels, in the classrooms, dining hall, and even a school trip. The students were given a period of three days to collect images that captured the theme stated above. After the images were developed, the students selected images that best highlighted their school experiences. These images were later used in a collage to generate information, and assisted in coding and recognizing themes that emerged throughout the process. This strategy of data collection was encouraged by Hancock, Windridge and Ockleford (2007), where they stated that analysis of data in a research involves summarising the mass data collected and presenting the results in a way that communicates the most important features. Thus, codes and themes emerged as a result of the study, and could not be pre-selected. The approach enabled the participants to drive the focus of the study, and therefore led the researcher to the results that appropriately matched their experiences.

Hancock et. al. (2007) further emphasised that the process of coding was guided by the frequencies that certain variables occurred as part of the data, and helped paint “the big picture”, or over-arching themes that lent to the creation of feasible solutions that addressed the underlying issues faced by the deaf learners.

Wang (1999) indicated that there were several benefits for using photo voice as a means to gain insight into issues that were present in a given community, particularly as photo voice was a participatory technique. Specifically, Wang noted that the goals of photo voice were to enable people to record and reflect their community’s strengths and concerns, as well as to promote critical dialogue and knowledge of personal and community issues through large and small group discussions of photographs thus, inherent flexibility. The first was that, unlike an interview, the range at which directions were given to participants was limited, and thereby more difficult to influence them beyond providing the initial instructions.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010) qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organizing data in categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories. With this understanding, it was clear that the data analysis for my research followed a similar pattern to the inductive process. This was due to the fact that the data collection process sought to code and theme the various traits that emerged from the participants as they engaged in the study. These codes and themes were loosely based on the research questions, but were subject to change due to the responses of the deaf learners.

Additionally, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) further argued that one characteristic that distinguishes qualitative research from quantitative research is that the analysis is done during data generation and after all the data have been gathered. The data collection and analysis are interwoven, influencing one another. Thus, certain codes or themes emerged in response to what was witnessed in the data collection. It was clear that the photo voice may act as a catalyst, engaging the participants in the study, and providing them with the opportunity to identify the foundation for what the focus group and individual interviews revealed. These codes and themes were then analyzed through the frequency with which they emerged in the study, and how it related to the geographies of the deaf learners at the school.

Similarly, Cohen et. al. (2007) stated qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data. In short qualitative data analysis is about making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. As noted above, these categories reflected the research questions for this study, with the purpose of identifying factors affecting the deaf learners within this particular space and place, utilizing the data as a means to influence policy makers and the future of deaf education at the school in Swaziland. From this analysis, narrative stories of the deaf learners were told, giving them a platform to voice the issues they faced at the school.

3.7 VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) asserted that there are five aspects of validity. These are democratic, outcome, process, catalytic and dialogic. In this study, due to the various components used for data collection (photovoice, focus group and individual interviews), participants voices were heard and represented equally, thus achieving the democratic

principle. Secondly, while it was uncertain whether an immediate outcome of the study would be visible, given the purpose of the study, it was clear that the study would function as a catalytic measure to encourage action that will later address the problems that arose from the study. Shenton (2004) acknowledged that the key steps to achieving trustworthiness and validity in research are addressing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Of these components, credibility was achieved through the use of triangulation of the research methods through the use of photo voice, interviews and focus group, as well as the notes from the note taker, and the interpreter. This study was conducted through the use of a variety of people who were purposely involved to help ensure the accuracy of not only the questions being asked, but the understanding of the responses from the participants themselves. This was conceded by Creswell (2007) whereby it was noted that validation or the accuracy in qualitative research is imperative hence the trustworthiness of results must be considered in relation to certain qualitative concepts. However, most importantly, given the researcher's positionality, they had already developed a strong "familiarity with the culture" of the deaf learners and the working environment within the school, including the personnel. Thus, the researcher had a clear understanding of what was needed to start the research, and had levels of trustworthiness already created with the participants. Transferability related to the way in which the study can be applied to "other situations" (Shenton, 2004). This was essential given that the basis of this research was action-oriented. To ensure transferability, background context of the study was provided. The findings that were derived from this study are likely to influence other studies that may emerge in Swaziland, as well as policies and practices that were witnessed in schools. Dependability sought to ensure that if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar

results would be obtained (Shenton, 2004). This meant that the methods listed in the data collection section were followed, and consideration for withholding any bias the researcher had. Triangulation in data collection was also useful to enhance dependability.

3.8 LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF THE STUDY

There were several limitations and challenges evident in undergoing this particular study. When the deaf learners conducted the photo voice, the learners were threatened by the teachers and the support staff within school as it is a boarding school. I then managed to talk to the principal of the school, we then convened a meeting to explain about the study which the participants were engaged in. Though the meeting was convened, given the first reaction that the teachers and staff had to the project, the participants did not take much pictures in the school premises, some took more pictures at the school trip on the second day I managed to motivate them by explaining to them the importance of the research which was going to answer their questions. With my knowledge of deafness, I took the following considerations of having an interpreter, a note taker and deaf adult to help with communication to ensure clarity with whatever was being asked. This was to assist in addressing limitations regarding communication since Bleckly (2014) also cited that deaf learners have poor speech language development hindering their ability to communicate effectively and a poor mental acuity due to poor speech and language development.

Despite the steps taken to ensure that accurate information was extracted from and between the participants and the researcher, Imrie and Edwards (2007) recognized that the potential exclusion of the voices of deaf people in a context whereby interviews with them are often conducted through sign interpreters. While an interpreter was used to ask and answer questions, the use of a video recording device allowed the researcher to view the interviews

themselves, and see and interpret the information presented by the deaf learners first hand. Therefore, the information gathered from the note taker was scrutinized by the deaf adults to ensure the truthfulness of what was written and interpreted information. Thus, the video helped check the accuracy of this particular process.

In addition, the problems that the researcher faced were getting permission from parents, the parents do not attend meetings even when asked to and they don't respond to the written correspondences made by the school. To deal with this limitation, the researcher met with the principal of the school and allowed me to pursue the project after discussing with her what the research aimed to achieve.

3.9 ETHICAL ISSUES

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) argued that since educational research deals with human beings, it is of paramount importance to take into consideration the ethical and legal responsibilities of conducting research. As a researcher, it was important to understand the impact that the study may have on the participants and those indirectly involved or affected. This was further cautioned by Clandinin and Murphy (2007) when they argued that the importance of moving beyond the institutional narrative of 'do no harm'. This is possible by learning an attitude of empathetic listening, not being judgemental and suspending your disbeliefs as a researcher. Thus, maintaining a level of ethics was not only observed in the technical strategies that the researcher followed in terms of informed consent, but also in the manner in which the study was conducted at the face-to-face level. In recognition of the

above, in order to complete this study, it was mandatory to gain ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu Natal.

I obtained permission from the school principal, parents of the participants and from the participants themselves through the use of consent letters. This was to ensure that the rights and welfare of the participants and the school were protected, and so that the participants were free to contribute to the study, without fear of negative consequences or other concerns they may have had. Therefore, all identities used for this research were provided with pseudonyms, to maintain confidentiality and protect the participants. Upon being asked to participate in the study, the deaf learners were called to a meeting where the study was explained to them with the help of the deaf adults, interpreter and the note taker to ensure that they understood and had the opportunity to ask questions. It was also explained that they had the right to opt out of the study should they choose or feel uncomfortable.

The school and the participants did not receive any material gains for participating in this research project and the learners were expected to respond to each question in a manner that reflects their own personal opinion. Considerations were made to conceal any faces of individuals who appeared in the images collected as data. This means that confidentiality was maintained as personal identities were protected. The photographer's identity also remained anonymous. The school or the participants' identities were not divulged under any circumstance.

In addition, all learners' responses were treated with strict confidentiality and pseudonyms were used (real names of the participants and the institution was not used throughout the research process). Participation was voluntary; therefore, participants were free to withdraw

at any time from the study without negative or undesirable consequences to them. Furthermore, participants were told about why they had been selected to participate in the research. The participants were not, under any circumstances, forced to disclose what they did not want to reveal and the researcher asked for permission from the participants each time she/he wished to use audio-recorder or any voice or picture capturing device.

Data was stored in the University of KwaZulu-Natal locked in a cupboard under the guardianship of my supervisor for a maximum period of five years; thereafter it will be destroyed by burning.

3.10. CONCLUSION

The section covered the methodological practices addressing approaches needed for qualitative research. This included focusing on the lived experiences told by the deaf learners, and how the dynamics found within the schooling context affected the learners, as well as the spaces and places of the deaf learners within this environment. Finally, the research methods acknowledged above negotiate the complexities found within the schooling complex. This was demonstrated through a series of data generation methods [semi-structured interviews, a focus group and photo voice project] all aimed at gaining a sense of the personal perceptions of the deaf learners. It later covered the narrative inquiry, whereby the research will set out to produce life-stories of the participants as a means to generate solutions to the problems they face. As a teacher of the deaf, this will prove a necessary way to positively influence deaf education in the future. The challenges of the study and ethical considerations indicate the importance of anonymity ensure that participants in the study are protected and can be encouraged to safely share their lived experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the findings of the study taken from the photo voice, individual interviews and group dialogue. In this way, the research questions were further interrogated, revealing the data that was presented in this chapter. From this study, there were three processes in motion that shaped the experiences of deaf learners at a residential school for the deaf. These were clarified in depth in the corresponding section. Firstly, these processes are dynamics, as seen within the paradigm that consists of child sociology and disability geographies, that is how the deaf learners' capabilities are observed and doubted by the qualified adults who work within the schooling context. Secondly, negotiating can be understood as the deaf learners' struggles to prove their capabilities and justify their identities. Finally, spaces and places can best be understood as how the children are afforded or denied opportunities to reach their potential as deaf individuals.

Several major themes emerged through the data collection process that were analysed in this chapter. Each section of the chapter was broken down into themes, assessing how they relate within the objectives of the study. Under the first objectives: a) Sign Language and Deaf Culture, b) Personal Growth and Self-Esteem and c) Stigmatisation and Exclusion will be explored. Under the second objective, the themes that relate to the dynamics of deaf learners are: a) Power and Relationships, b) Communication and Understanding Deaf Culture, c) Self-Expression and Inclusion and d) Attitudes and Behaviour. Finally, themes under places and spaces of deaf learners are a) Stigmatisation and b) Deaf Culture and Sign Language. It is evident that an overarching theme revealed in the data is, "understanding Sign Language and Deaf Culture".

4.1 EXPERIENCES OF DEAF LEARNERS AT A SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

4.1.1 Sign Language and Deaf Culture

In relation to the experiences of deaf learners at a School for the Deaf, the data revealed that acknowledgement of Sign Language and Deaf Culture is of utmost importance to how the students interact within the schooling context and is tied to their identity. The use of Sign Language and deaf culture prevailing in the school for the deaf enhance self-esteem and confidence. Such prevailing exposure results to personal growth of deaf learners. The deaf culture builds positive attitudes of the learners' experiences at the school through socialization.

Some participants of the individual interview stated that:

“Because of Sign Language, Deaf Culture and Deaf community I am able to understand my peers and socialize. We are able to take part in activities such as GLOW, where we discuss topics and problem solve. We also get to attend workshop” (Violet, age 14, female, individual interview).

Living in a residential school for the deaf is nice because we can sign quickly and always understand each other (Bheki).

I was welcomed and taught how to prepare for school and I also learned sign language from other deaf learners (Tiny).

I enjoy and have a sense of pride. Church is well-explained in signs and playing with other deaf learners (Pam).

This is supported by Nikolarazi and Hadjidakou (2006) who emphasised the challenges that deaf children face because of the language gap.

4.1.2 Communication barrier

It also transpired that deaf learners are experiencing difficulties regarding communication. Thus the deaf child's academic and intellectual development is impacted negatively. This

emerged from the interviews and photovoice aspects of the study. Language and communication does not only impact academics, but rather the whole life for the deaf learner. Language needs to be developed in such a way as to be used to teach, guide and encourage the learners not only for academics, but in other areas of life.

When probing the participants on their experiences with the teachers and staff at the school, everything tied to sign language, deaf culture and communication. The following are some quotations from the interviews:

Sign Language is not on the same level with the staff. Some are lazy with communication. It would be nice if teachers and staff would be competent in Sign Language (Bheki, age 17, male, individual interview).

There is a communication breakdown between us and the house parents. The teaching is okay, though they cannot sign deeply. They often talk so much that the mouth moves in such a way that disturbs the facial expressions and causes confusion (Mbonisi, age 17, male, individual interview).

I hate gossips, house parents scold a lot by talking and we don't have an idea of what they say. Teaching is not in depth for me, making it difficult to learn new skills. Teachers never explain things (Tiny, age 15, female, individual interview).

House parents scold a lot and complain when the bell rings and we are late, forgetting we are deaf and cannot hear the bell. I don't like scolding. One house parent is quick at slapping us rather than solving problems or counsels us when we have done wrong. We need an explanation instead of simply saying its "wrong". People talk to us and do not sign to us, it makes us feel bad (Pam, age 18, female, focus group interview).

Miss-communicating stories of what took place leads to gossiping, quarrelling and children copying bad behaviour by the matrons, who also change stories on us (Thomas, age 17, male, individual interview).

As you can see, most of the learners indicate that they feel communication between the adults, especially the house parents, is negative and centred on scolding and not encouraging communication.

This was also supported by the discussions that came forward in the individual interviews and focus group discussions. Participants acknowledged their appreciation of being able to communicate with their peers.

School for the Deaf is good and helps us develop communication and self-expression, but communication proves challenging between learners and the staff or teachers. I enjoy learning, and it is important in life to understand things and I am happy here at school (Mbonisi).

Given these statements, it is clear that while the participants appreciate and benefit from living at a residential school for the Deaf because of the social support provided by the environment, challenges remain when the learners interact with staff and teachers where language barriers are prevalent.

This means that there is no mutual understanding between the teachers, house parents and pupils, in such a way that they are never involved when decisions are made, this is due to the language barrier. In this case, because the teachers and house parents do not know how to communicate with the children, and the children cannot communicate verbally, the deaf learners are then left out of the decision-making. An example of this is not communicating with the learners, and therefore assumptions are made about what the learners did or did not do, often meaning that the learners are found guilty of something they did not realize they were in trouble for or was even wrong. Due to the language barrier, learners are never taught what is right or wrong, but are rather punished for bad behaviour, afterwards further guidance

or instruction is often not provided.



Researcher: Why did you take this photo?

“This is the house mother’s flat, which is attached to our hostel. The house mother does not use Sign Language, but rather talks in SiSwati a lot. The house mother also leaves the hostel for a long time and I am not able to access toilet paper when we need to use it. They don’t know a great deal of Sign Language, and what they do know they sign weakly. It seems as though the house mother cares more about socializing with the other house parents than interacting with the Deaf learners... The house parents are even unable to help solve conflicts between the other girls. She cannot provide guidance and support for the girls” –Pam, age 18, female, photo voice

In her individual interview she further say that:

I don't like to be with house parents, I prefer to be with Deaf adult (Pam).

House parents do not want to talk to us, like at home, because of limited sign, that they ignore us. It is nice with the deaf house parents because it's easy to communicate with them. With the teachers we just greet each other and that is the end of the conversation. The teachers like talking more than signing (Mbonisi).

This communication barrier is relieved through the presence of deaf support teachers that assist at the school. Mbonisi recommends that there be “support teachers in all classes,” as a means to develop their access to learning.

We need a sense of love in the community between teachers, house parents and students where everyone can mix and interact (Mbonisi).

Thomas further acknowledges that his Deaf house parent is able to assist with his education because he remembers some of the signs from when he was in school. In this way, the best means through which to support the deaf learners is to provide a community where they can communicate freely and interact with individuals who can serve as mentors, something that is lacking due to the language barrier.

I like the interaction with my deaf colleagues, it's perfect because they can use sign language, socialize and it's easy for us to solve problems and discuss issues (Pam).

I agree, it's nice to have other deaf role models and we are encouraged for the future (Bheki).

This is recognized by Romano (2013) who cited that when deaf learners are exposed to sign language and socialization with deaf adults and colleagues, they acquire leadership and self-advocacy skills that also work to boost their self-esteem. Moreover, Durr (1999) indicates that “hearingization” affects how interactions and relationships between hearing and deaf people are formed. The hearing people need to move past their want for the deaf to assimilate to a hearing world, rather, they need to recognise that the deaf people cannot communicate through verbal speech, and so the hearing people need to meet the deaf individuals at their own level. Deaf people have always lived in other peoples’ world. Everything done by deaf

people is what hearing people expect them to do, regardless of whether it most suitable for the deaf, while also ignoring or neglecting the opportunity for them to have their own voice in matters that affect them and their lives.

This is often impacted by the attitudes and beliefs held by hearing people towards deaf individuals. Durr (1999) highlighted that even Alexander Graham Bell had negative feelings towards sign language. Durr believed that sign language hindered deaf people, serving as a crutch. Sign language was not admired, but looked down upon as if it were not a legitimate way to communicate and learn. This is echoed by Mbonisi, Thomas and Bheki who shared this story in the focus group discussion.

4.1.3 Negative attitude and Cultural stigmatisation of deaf learners

Deaf learners also reported that they were sidelined and stigmatized for being deaf. The participant had this to say:

Hearing people laugh at us and say we are disabled. They make fun of Sign Language and pity us. It makes us feel ashamed. We are stigmatised with our culture (Mbonisi).

There is no respect because we are not involved in decision making. All is imposed on us, without ever explaining to us (Thomas).

The Sign Language used by the teachers is okay, but they do not follow the deaf culture, as they speak and sign at the same time (Bheki).

This also lends to the previous statements shared by the participants. In this sense, it can be inferred that the indirect communication makes it increasingly difficult for deaf learners to adequately share their opinions and ideas in a forum that they are understood and validated by their superiors. In noting the cultural stigmatisation, it is challenging for deaf learners to feel included and important as people judge them to be lacking in intelligence and lesser because of their language. Sign Language itself is also stigmatised, seeing as limited or

insufficient, as mentioned previously. Finally, Bheki noted that understanding the importance of deaf culture goes hand in hand with being able to communicate thoughtfully and effectively in sign language. This is further supported by Romano (2013), where she maintained that there are common qualities that can be recognised by good teachers of deaf learners. Here Romano acknowledged that a sense of humour is a value asset and quality of a teacher. When a teacher is committed to teaching the deaf, they must understand and value their culture. This also includes interactions between teachers and the children, which makes the environment friendly and welcoming. Moreover, since the researcher is within the deaf culture, a teacher must be able to sign and understand the children, imparting knowledge through the way they learn best; deaf culture.

I enjoy interacting with deaf teachers and deaf assistance. There are those who are just okay to be there, but I just ignore them because they are proud (Violet).

If teachers have a smile on their face, it's easy to learn, but maybe the next day they are upset because of something at home. Then they are less approachable (Mbonisi).

Violet's comments are a similar sentiment Mbonisi regarding the attitudes and behaviours of the house parents and teachers towards the learners. They are frequently changing moods between the teachers and house parents puts strain on the deaf child, because it impacts how they interact with them – if the house parent or teacher is visibly unapproachable, it hinders the learning of the child or the ability for them to seek support, as they are discouraged by the mood or negative behaviour.

4.2 DYNAMICS AFFECTING DEAF LEARNERS WITHIN THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL CONTEXT

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Writing English, “dynamic” refers to the “*way in which people or things behave and react to each other in a particular*

situation”. Understanding that definition, this section looked closely at what and how the deaf learners were impacted by the staff that they interacted with and the things that either impeded or enhanced their learning.

4.2.1 Deaf learners being excluded

There are varied dynamics that affect how the learners navigate and negotiate the space within the schooling context. These are determined by the ways in which the deaf learners interact with the parents, teachers, staff and other learners and how that relates back to their experiences and shapes their identities.

In English we are asked to look for difficult words from the dictionary, but no one explains the task in sign language. The teacher signs differently, she has her own signs when we went to South Africa [on a trip] she brought her own signs and she’s changing SiSwati signs to South African Sign Language. She claims she knows more than us (Pam).

The hearing house parents don’t interact with us. Only the deaf house parents, but sometimes they are moody. I don’t study, I prefer a review by the teacher where they tell us what to study (Thomas).

I feel excluded because we can’t understand when they speak to us. Their behaviour makes me not want to be included. It makes me feel like I’m in prison, because the house parents do not want to be active, instead we are made to sit and watch TV (Violet).

Do not like people when talking to me because I am deaf. This is a school for the deaf, they must follow the deaf culture, hearing people should respect the logo in our school badge, which is -- School for the Deaf (Violet).

I’m in a school for the deaf, culture is to sign not to speak, when the teachers join the school they try to sign then stops. Teachers claim to improve when told that they would be transferred once the pressure is off and they stop signing (Bheki).

Through analyzing the data, it became evident that the social and medical models of deafness served as the foundation for the responses of the participants and how they interact with the world around them. Staten (2011) highlighted that the value behind the social or cultural

model of deafness is understanding that deafness has nothing to do with a deaf learners capabilities, whether it be their ability to understand and learn. They need to be empowered and encouraged rather than be viewed as impaired and unable.

Collins and Coleman (2008) concurred that the teachers become authoritative and at the same time they observe the children as if they are under surveillance, in such a way that the children are not free in the classroom. The authority in some ways overshadows the role of education in the classroom. Commands are given and routines are followed in order to control the students, but at the end of the day the children's academic endeavours are not successful. This then results in the learners becoming labelled as slow learners and are taken as not being able to perform better compared to the hearing learners.

There is a reluctance of learning sign language and not being dedicated to the work of teaching the deaf. The teachers do not see the need of improving their teaching strategies, because they see deafness as a disability, not as an identity, since they are a community with their own language and their culture too. That hinders the quality of education that is given to the deaf child. That also applies to the parents because they can't even communicate with their children to impart knowledge to them. As a result, that has also made the child not to feel like she has to acquire more knowledge because she is used to being in a state of lacking information. They're naturally curious children who are eager to learn but they are hindered by receiving the information they desire. It would be beneficial for teachers to do evaluations at the start of each term to evaluate where the learners are at, even weekly, so that these assessments could be used to ascertain what information the children have gained. This would make the children more responsible for individual studying.

4.2.2 Parental involvement

It emerged from the interviews and focus group discussions that parents could play a vital role in enhancing their child's education. One of the participants stated that:

If only my parents were deaf they would value my education as they do for the hearing siblings. (Pam: Focus Group).

This shows that parents are not behind her education and do not bother whether she is at school or not at school. She feels left out. Delgado-Gartan and Ruiz (1992) highlighted several ways in which parents can support and advocate for the education of their deaf children. They further added that parents can play an important role in their deaf child's education. This would also be seen as an aspect to promote the norms, values and beliefs of what is expected at home and what is expected at school. Parents can even help the teachers to understand the child, as the parents raised the deaf child and are able to give valuable insight into how best to care for the child. This would create an important relationship between the parents and teachers that they can then work together to support the overall development of the deaf learner. Moreover, this would lead to the child achieving the best results academically.

In this sense, parents and teachers should ideally be working hand in hand to provide the best support to enhance the deaf child's education. This is further supported by Delgado-Gartan and Ruiz (1992) who reiterate, that it is crucial for teachers and parents to know their children. As all learners are different, once you know a specific learner better, it will be easy to find strategies that will suite the specific educational needs of that child.

Instead, the participants acknowledged a sad reality where their parents and family members do not work to enable them to feel empowered; rather, parents view their children first as

disabled, ignoring the potential that lies beneath the “disability”. It is also evidenced that the participants feel as though they are the last priority when it comes to catering to their needs.

It's hard for my father to save money since its a big family and I'm always the last on the list, first is the hearing siblings to pay for their school fees and cater for my step-mother who travels to Manzini since she's a nurse, then I'm the last. I don't know whether it's because I'm deaf or because my mother was divorced and my step-mother can't advocate for me (Pam, Individual Interview).

Bheki made similar observations during his photovoice interview.

Researcher: Why did you take this photo?

“I took the photo because I was surprised to notice that nobody bothers to assist him so that the drool doesn't continuously dampen his clothes. He is a clever boy, and could maybe even do better in a different schooling environment. There are other schools for children with disabilities that might be better equipped to assist him, as he can hear. I wonder why no one has bought him a bib to prevent the drool from soaking his clothes, and that is why I decided to buy one for him” –Bheki, age 17, male, Photovoice interview



In the forgoing photo Bheki expresses his disappointment on the parental support with regard to his deafness predicament. What Bheki expressed during the photo voice interview relates to how Staten (2011) acknowledges the need to support and encourage healthy identity development. As Bheki recognized, if the child was in an environment where parents could fully support him as he is, he might develop to his full capacity and have a positive identity construction of himself. In this sense, the boy's personal growth is contingent on what the house mothers, teachers and students view his potential to be. It appears as though care has not been taken to see beyond the boy's challenges and explore what he is truly capable, in that way he is sidelined because of the attitudes that others carry towards him. This relates to what Pam was saying in that family members do not actively address her needs, instead the hearing children are the first to be catered for. As her siblings are hearing, it is easier for them to express their needs to their parents, but this is not possible for Pam, who experiences difficult language barriers at home because none of the family members speak Sign

Language. Through viewing deafness as a disability, it echoes what Staten (2011) stated that hearing people tend to make assumptions about the potential of deaf individuals, which always suppresses the exposure of the child that could help them gain skills. Bheki easily acknowledged that the boy is clever, because he was able to see the boy as an individual and not label him as disabled.

This serves to support Staten (2011) who further stated that every child is an individual, and must be afforded the opportunity to be valued and understood as a whole person, not just a disabled person. Deaf children should not be compared to other people, but be evaluated at his or her own level.

4.2.3 Stigmatisation of Deaf learners

Stigma of deafness was revealed to be an important theme of the study. This is clearly witnessed in key quotations extracted from the interviews and focus group discussion. Violet truly captures some of the visible attitudes that hearing people believe about deaf individuals. In observing signs that Violet chooses to express her experiences with, it is evident that she has had very negative interactions with hearing individuals who view Sign Language as something beneath a spoken language or as inferior mode of communication, that is used by a group of people who are only worthy of pity.

They think we are the same with blind people, they don't understand deafness. They think I'm stupid because I use Sign Language. They try to talk to me and I feel ashamed, they also pity me and give me money (Violet).

They laugh at us and say we are disabled, make fun of Sign Language and pity us. It makes us feel ashamed. We are stigmatised with our culture (Bheki, Focus Group).

They think I was bewitched and that I am disabled. Pastor's yell at us trying to heal our deafness (Bheki, Focus Group).

They make fun of the way we sign; they use village signs without Deaf culture. They sympathise with us and feel shame on me. They don't believe I'm deaf and hit me to speak. I feel bullied. They think we gossip when we sign (Bheki, Individual Interview).

This was echoed by Pam, who acknowledged the way in which people interact with her at home.

“People say God punished my parents for something that went wrong. Some think I was bewitched by neighbours. I'm stigmatised that I am not free to go to town, but remain at home” (Pam, Individual Interview).

To break this statement down, first, it is clear that Pam's experiences relate to those of Violet, in that negative attitudes and beliefs are held towards deaf individuals. Moreover, these attitudes and beliefs shape how they see her potential and what she is capable of. Because of her deafness, she is not free to walk around outside of her homestead, despite the fact that she is an adult in accordance with the constitution. In this sense, Pam is being denied the opportunity to explore and learn from her environment, and instead, decisions are being made for her. Because of this, she is unable to be independent and discover the world on her own terms, and give meaning to her life. Similar sentiments were shared by Bheki that hearing children make fun of them; their culture and their sign language.

These findings are affirmed by Barker and Weller (2003). Barker and Weller argued the need to consider children as active leaders in their own lives who must learn to be independent and also work towards creating the dream environment that they want. Deaf children should also have the opportunity to contribute to creating this environment.

This is significant because the interactions and experiences of Deaf children indicate that they are not seen as “competent social actors”, but rather as individuals in constant need of support, incapable of caring for themselves. This impacts how they are treated by family

members, neighbours, school staff and community members who harbour the negative attitudes. Other comments from the students indicate that deafness in Swaziland is still strongly viewed as a disability and misfortune. This is emphasized by the other students as well. These negative attitudes also influence the deaf learners' education because this affects the actions of the parents, whom tend to prioritise their hearing children. Moreover, it becomes a sort of internalized oppression, meaning that the deaf learners have accepted their lower status and do not advocate for themselves. This affects their self-esteem of the deaf learners are impacted and these negative attitudes shape their understanding of whether they can or cannot change their circumstances.

4.2.4 Socialisation and extra-curricular activities

When asked what they like most about living in a residential school for the deaf, the participants overwhelmingly listed the various extra-curricular activities that they partake in, as well as the ability to socialize with their fellow deaf classmates. This photo taken by Mbonisi represents the excitement the students feel when they go on trips.



Researcher: What do you like most about school?

Mbonisi: What I like most at the school ... is trips because it is nice to see places and what other people do... socializing with my deaf colleagues because I understand things in a deeper level because of sign language, sports competitions and other internal activities because it is funny and nice to have jokes because at home there is no one to joke with. (Individual Interview).

In this sense, Mbonisi's experiences are enhanced by being able to have more intimate conversations with classmates and teachers who understand him on a deeper level and can help him understand the world around him. Similarly, Violet acknowledged that she enjoyed the trips as well as after school activities and that they added positively to her experiences at the residential school.

“I like Sign Language and Deaf culture, deaf community and being able to understand each other, GLOW¹ because it discusses topics and solving problems, attending workshops and enjoy playing netball with deaf and hearing pupils... trips to the cultural village and other local places, trip to Pretoria where we saw Nelson Mandela Statue and also visited other places in Pretoria” (Violet, Individual Interview).

From this it is clear that extra-curricular activities work to boost the students’ self-esteem and confidence. Pam and Bheki also agreed, and said



Researcher: Why did you take this picture?

Bheki: Visiting places is nice because we are not kept in one place. Self-esteem and confidence is developed in drama, and Boys Reaching Out (BRO)¹ boosted my self-esteem and confidence and I enjoy teaching other boys and being a role model. (Photovoice)

in a school trip to Pretoria, the deaf learners had the opportunity to meet other deaf learners of their age and compete in sports and perform in drama. This truly boosted their self-esteem when they saw themselves winning and being the best. This is noteworthy because at school, learners are able to add important layers to their identities that move beyond being simply labelled as “deaf” by hearing people. This means Bheki is a role model, Pam is good in drama and Violet can solve problems on her own.

The going out made us feel proud of our culture and being deaf (Pam, Focus Group).

Through mingling with other deaf learners they could gain a sense of pride in being deaf as they realized that there are other children like them all over the world. This enabled the deaf learners to identify as deaf and adopt this culture and identity, rather than being labelled as a

¹ GLOW stands for Girls Leading Our World and is a life-skills based club that focuses on leadership and empowerment of young women and girls.

disabled. Whereas in an inclusive setting, where children may feel isolated as they do at home, unable to share a communal language and being treated differently.

Another important aspect of living in a residential school for the deaf is socializing.

Interacting with other deaf learners is good because of sign language, it's nice to play and joke, we understand each other and share news, and we also understand the culture (Bheki, Focus Group).

At home there is no one to talk to since they don't know signs and in that way I am frustrated by my coming late to school (Thomas, Individual Interview).

Romano (2013) identifies the important role that a residential school has in instilling social, cultural and linguistic meaning in the children's lives. This micro-community with teachers, staff and peers enables the deaf learners to interact and acquire valuable life skills that can assist them in socialising in the greater community and also instilling the deaf culture.

The deaf learners were able to interact with their colleagues and able to exchange their culture when they were practicing during their school trip to Pretoria. The students from Pretoria danced in their own culture and our learners presented their native dances. This was successful because the learners were able to communicate through their natural language. This experience also assisted in making the teachers proud and acting like a team seeking to win a competition. So it appears that when teachers at the school are out they do a good job supporting and cheering the learners on. There was a great deal of cooperation. However, ironically, there is an attitude when the teachers are around the school grounds. The teachers are reluctant and do not always fully participate and be active. This is noticed by the deaf learners who appreciate the support and wish the teachers were more involved in their learning and activities.

Because here, this is the only community for the deaf, it is preferable that the children visit other schools for the deaf and other communities for the deaf or we invite them to come to our school so that they can appreciate and see deafness as a true identity and not as a disability. They can even share what they learn at the school and create an exchange of knowledge through peer-to-peer education. This was also echoed by Staten (2011) who argued that in a residential school, there are specific programs that children follow. This includes natural socialisation, school trips and structured time where they can play, learn and study. During this time, the deaf learners are able to explain what they have learned, particularly during study time. Therefore, they are able to help each other and assist in helping each other achieve their educational goals. Thus, socialisation and play is an important part of the school experience and leaves room for deaf learners to build their self-esteem and confidence as well as their sign language vocabulary. Even their vocabulary is widened because Siswati Sign Language which is still more social than academic, as there are many signs that are yet to be developed. Through meeting other deaf individuals they gain new meanings for words that they do not have a sign for and it assists in building a stronger, broader vocabulary.

Deaf children truly thrive when they are immersed in a community that supports respects and honours their culture and language. O'Brien (2011) supports the idea that deaf learners will obtain high-quality education when they are in an environment that respects and understands their culture and values their language, creating a sense of community as they all share the space. The presence of the deaf adults at the school is valuable because they spend time with the deaf learners and are able to help them work through their problems and assist in problem solving when issues arise. This would be challenging and the deaf learners would not have an appropriate outlet were the deaf adults not available to assist.

The deaf learners also revealed that extracurricular activities lead to a very comfortable community as it's not every child who is academically inclined. Some other children are very good in athletics, the arts, and trade skills. When extra-curricular activities are fully implemented with a variety of activities, it is easy for a child to identify where his or her interest is, and that skill she or he has is able to develop. This then works to boost the deaf learner's self-esteem, to see him or herself able to do something and even win trophies. Romano (2013) reported that extracurricular activities such as athletics, drama, etc., promote the social development component that is necessary in deaf education, which even occurs in the dormitories.

In this sense, the way you treat others has a powerful impact on how they understand what you are teaching or what they should learn (Staten, 2011). Essentially, the way teachers apply themselves when teaching should have the integrity which is going to be developed by the child, rather than as an afterthought to the teaching process. Teachers should dedicate their time and energy to developing the curriculum to enhance the learning that can be completed in the classroom, not to simply copy what is found in the course books and hope to have a positive result. The lessons must be motivated by the learners and their learning styles and teaching aids must reach the needs of the learners to ensure that the messages are transferred properly. When the teacher evaluates him or herself to see if what she wanted to put across has been fulfilled it will be very easy because learning is visibly occurring in the classroom. This is unfortunately met with the reality appropriately photographed by Bheki.

4.2.5 Living in a Residential School: Academics and Boarding

With regard with living in a residential school the participants of the study had the following to say:

“A lot of disturbances in classes like meetings, sports, talking to their [other teachers'] colleagues and going to the bank” (Violet, Individual Interview).

“Sign Language is not used to explain because teachers have limited sign language” (Mbonisi, Focus Group).

“The English used in our books is difficult to understand and do not have signs for them” (Bheki, Focus group).

“We don’t interact with the teachers as they have attitude and are too proud to talk to us and it lowers my confidence and self-esteem” (Thomas, Focus Group).

“We sit in a horseshoe shape so that it’s easy to see others signing than sitting in rows. Horseshoe is the culture of the deaf” (Violet, Individual Interview).

“We do not interact with teachers because they have negative attitude against us” (Tiny, Focus Group).

Teachers at the school do not use signs thus it feels like they hate us, some are stubborn, they don’t care for us, if sick it takes long time to take care of us (Pam, Individual Interview).

The adult parents provide no counselling, instead they just punish us (Thomas, Individual Interview).

We do not understand the words that are in the book. Sometimes we ask house parents when studying (Mbonisi, Focus Group).

There is no consistent help by the house parents when studying (Tiny, Focus Group).

Deaf learners do not know English because of limited vocabulary” “We do not have tables to use for studying so to perform better (Mbonisi, Focus Group).

Sign Language is limited at the school. We need to develop it (Violet, Focus Group).

These quotes are some of the challenges that children say in relation to learning at the school. Teachers should be role models so children can copy from them. If a teacher wants the learners to be punctual should be punctual himself or herself; if teachers want the children not to run away, then the teachers too should not sneak away. If the teachers are caught doing something wrong then it destroys the trust between the teachers and the learners, and it is

evident in the photo voice and interviews that the learners notice the behaviour and conduct of the teachers. As leaders, teachers need to be mindful of what they are exhibiting in front of the learners, and understand that they lead the way for the children's futures. This becomes particularly difficult when the teacher tries to discipline or explain something to the deaf learners. The learners see the teachers as equals in a community, yet the teachers look down on the learners. Here, the teachers have a unique opportunity to build positive relationships with the learners because they have a greater skill in Sign Language as compared to their parents.

This is also relevant in the transferring of important skills that the learners need to further their studies and lead healthy lives. A dependency was visible amongst the participants who are used to being told what to do, and are just learning now how to be proactive.

If we had study skills, we would not be depending on other people (Mbonisi Focus Group).

Teachers are responsible for imparting ways of doing things that go beyond the curriculum, because with the hearing learners, they can gain information informally, but because of the lack of auditory input, the deaf learners are behind. Therefore, education of the deaf is crucial in all aspects, and goes beyond the classroom.

Thomas [participant] cited that they do not interact with teachers because they have attitude towards them and are too proud to talk to them. This result in lowering deaf child's self-esteem and most of the participants cited this teacher attitude. The attitude shown by the teacher is also vice versa because even the deaf learners develop a reciprocating attitude towards the teacher, leading to the poor performances that are exhibited by the teachers. The attitude also is aligned with the limited signs that teachers have.

In another note the deaf students complained that at time they are left unattended by the teachers. This foregoing statement is supported by a photovoice interview from Bheki.

Researcher: What do you see in this picture?

“This classroom is empty because the children of this class are crammed together in another classroom. This is so one teacher can teach the subject to more students and have more free time to themselves. But it is not fair because the other teachers will sit and talk, whilst all of the students in one class [Class 5] come together and are too full in the small space. The purpose of the school is to educate the deaf.” – Bheki, Photovoice Interview



Statten (2011) summarised the importance of teachers establishing respect and tolerance to all deaf learners. This shows that a teacher plays a very crucial role in raising a deaf child, inside and outside of the classroom. The learners hold the teachers at a high standard and take role modelling seriously. In fact, they take their lives seriously and want others to take their lives seriously as well.

Romano (2013) furthers the notion that the presence of deaf adults in a residential school permits the establishment of deep learning of deaf culture and sign language that assist the deaf learners to gain experience which is not available at home.

Participants also cited that they need more good deaf role models, something that is also echoed by Statten. Deaf learner's performance is not up to the level we could expect but I have observed that teachers have also contributed by their bad behaviour. This observation affirms finding by Chapman et al. (2011). Where they point out that teachers beliefs, attitudes and actions create the context in which children and young people are able to participate. The failure of teachers to show respect and have a positive attitude creates a poor foundation of

learning, which has always resulted in poor performances, thus creating a cycle. Teachers do not take the time, nor do they hold the belief that the deaf learners are capable of performing better by trying constantly to be innovative with their teaching methods, which will enable the deaf learners' self-esteem to be boosted and even motivated.

Statten (2011) observed that there's a great role that teachers play in shaping the learning environment for which the deaf learners learn in. This is influenced by their attitudes, beliefs and actions towards the children they teach, and their philosophy of education. Ultimately, it is the environment that a child is placed in, and the experiences that emerge that shape a person's character. If the belief of the teacher is negative in such a way as to doubt the child's potential, then the child remains de-motivated. However, if the teacher were to encourage the child through academic and other developmental milestones, the child would also be motivated and strive to do better.

Statten (2011) also highlighted the significance of encouraging the children, regardless of how that learner is perceived, so that every effort that he or she makes in the classroom or hostel environment is appreciated. Instilling this confidence can assist in guiding that same child to achieving greater things. That also promotes the relationship between the leadership and the child, rather than condemning the children which lowers their self-esteem and develops a negative sense of self. There needs to be a willingness to feel comfortably uncomfortable when teaching learners in a foreign language and culture. In this sense, teachers need not hide behind their pride in looking for a certain way in front of the deaf learners. The environment that is created to support and guide the learning process rests on the relationships that are established in as much as the way in which teachers and learners interact with each other.

The idea of losing face in particular is intriguing. In this sense, it is integral for adults working with deaf children to maintain integrity when working to communicate or address specific behavioural issues. Should the emphasis be placed on holding tight to past judgement, the child will be confused and the relationships that are formed between them and the teacher or staff member will be incomprehensible.

In the case of the school for the deaf in Swaziland, where learners often enter the school system on average at age of nine years, already this poses a great challenge for educators who seek to remould what has already been preconditioned in the children at an earlier age. This doesn't have to do with education alone, but is reflected in primary character development such as social and emotional behaviour. Male, Rayner, Scott and McNeish (2013) acknowledged that the behavioural challenges along with other disabilities create a diverse population at the school, with many complexities.

This is further supported by McNeish (2013) who insisted that awareness be made on the type of learner in the classroom. As more and more learning challenges become acknowledged, it is cause for a serious discussion on how to engage all learners in the classroom, regardless of their learning needs and styles.

At the School for the Deaf in Swaziland, the whole spectrum is represented in the makeup of the school population. We have pupils who are autistic, physically challenged, epileptic, and have other undiagnosed learning disabilities.

4.2.6 Power, relationships and decision making

Regardless of being people of their own character, they are not considered to be involved in discussions that impact their lives. An example of this is the examinations. It is crucial to first see whether the deaf people are comfortable or not with the way they are taught. If they are not comfortable, then they should be asked to make suggestions to make them comfortable when being taught and be given opportunities to say ways they might appreciate being taught or included in decisions being made about their futures. Instead, they are forced to follow the mainstream curriculum, whether they all fail, no one pays attention, and there has been great neglect to identify reason deaf learners are failing.

Moreover, nothing is in place for them to access the curriculum, such as hearing aids or interpreters. The purpose of special education is to identify the special needs of each learner and adapt the learning process for them, not to adapt the learner to the learning processes.

Even the participants identified appropriate communication as a fundamental aspect of their education. While there are areas still need to be improved, these needs could not be met in a mainstreamed environment where few others would be able to communicate with them in a common language.

When I tell house parents that I am sick to take me to hospital, they don't believe me. I have a problem because I think I have not been respected by the matrons (Bheki, Individual Interview).

In noting what Bheki said, because the house parents do not listen or try to understand what the deaf is undergoing, to the deaf learners, they feel they are being treated like inmates by being at a residential school where the house parents are the wardens who decide their fate. This experience can feel like prison where no one listens to the children and do not consider how they feel when making decisions. One of the participants had his to say:

Being the hostel makes me feel like I'm in prison because the house parents do not want to be active instead we are made to sit and watch T.V (Violet, Individual Interview).

This again comes down to the language barrier, that children can become fatally ill, the children are not being understood, hearing people hold assumptions that they know best. This is further justified by Pam, who acknowledged that the challenges she faces in the classroom when it comes to communication and language.

We are asked in English to look for difficult words from the dictionary, and no one explains in sign language. One teacher signs differently and have her own signs. When we went to South Africa she brought South African signs and she's changing SiSwati signs to South African sign language. She claims she knows more than us (Pam, Individual Interview).

Although the school for the deaf has not actually been used as a prison or form of punishment, there were parallels with what is stated here, and what some of the students expressed in their individual interviews. This frustration comes with the language barrier. Parents cannot discuss with their children what they like, or dislike, what is good or not good. Deaf children are kept at the school for the deaf because it is easy solution just to keep them in one place where they can be monitored, but again, the children are frustrated, because they are human, they have their own languages and capabilities, they want to explore what is going on outside of their bubble. This containment limits the ability for children to gain a sense of independence, and moreover, they are treated differently than their hearing peers at the mainstream schools, with limited opportunities.

The attitude of confining deaf learners generally come from the notion that hearing people are more educated and aware of what is going on around them, thus justifying their ability to make decisions for deaf people. Thus, Pam calls attention to the attitudes and beliefs held by the staff towards sign language and the deaf learners. Perhaps internal policies in Swaziland can address these issues.

“When we sign, teachers think we are gossiping and the matrons, we know teachers gossip about us. I am deaf, but I can lip read and see when they gossip about me.”(Pam, Individual Interviews).

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol from the United Nations (2006) illustrates the importance of recognising a person with disabilities as a free and independent person who can make his or her own choices. The Preamble further highlights the need for persons with disabilities to be seen as active participants in making decisions that affect their lives. Similarly, this is supported by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as cited by the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). Here, education is rendered an important avenue to enable a person to have access into society by means of providing them with the skills and knowledge to participate fully as citizens, enlightened on the power of economics and feel self-empowered to be independent. Bearing this in mind, a person needs to have holistic access to various aspects of society in order to be human and truly free. This is further expanded upon through the analysis that language is a key component of a person's identity and empowerment. The WFD further echoes the important role that Sign Language plays in a deaf person's life. Sign language helps shape a person's identity and solidifies them as a member of the Deaf Community. Similarly, SiSwati solidifies the nation of Swaziland by bringing together all Swazi people under a common language.

While these declarations articulate a valuable goal and standard that institutions and services for the deaf should achieve, practically, the school for the deaf is greatly lacking in meeting these basic human rights. In addition, these articles include deafness among disabilities: deafness is not a disability because deaf people have their own language, culture and identity.

The notion of soliciting suggestion from deaf learners on their learning is supported by Durr (1999) who advocated that disenfranchised people can be understood as those who have been neglected by those making the decisions. Those who hold power never include the minority group when taking decisions for them, which leaves them powerless. In this sense, institutions for the deaf should be independent in a way that deaf individuals are free to voice their concerns and contribute to the services available to them. Most of the services that are provided cater for the needs of hearing people, often leaving the deaf community as an afterthought to their programming.

Durr (1999) acknowledged the tension between mainstream and special schools. As even in here in Swaziland, all educational materials are formulated for the hearing population, and yet the deaf are to follow the same curriculum. Nobody ever involved the deaf specialists in designing an educational programme that would best suit the needs for deaf learners, or to see if they were comfortable with what is to be done or what was already in place. This is of particular interest, as often programme implementers feel proud of their ability to “include” the deaf in their strategic framework. The school for the deaf is treated as if there is nothing there to learn from, when in fact, the school acts as one of the most crucial entry points to deaf culture and holds considerable knowledge on deaf education.

Inclusion is not possible with deaf children unless consideration is made to their language, culture and identity. This is pinpointed by Cohen (1994) who interrogates the “normalization principle” that suggests that the goal of education for the deaf is to nurture and mould deaf children in such a way as to be assimilated into the hearing world and be as close to “hearing” as possible. However, this is not what a deaf learner needs to thrive academically. Even here in Swaziland, this attitude applies. We have cases where deaf or hard of hearing children

were enrolled previously in the mainstream schools, only for the teachers at those schools suggesting that the child be moved to a special setting in order to meet their academic needs. Moreover, a deaf learner cannot gain the identity and language expression that is crucial for them to live independent lives in a mainstream school where their language is not even recognised.

In looking at Swaziland's Disability Policy of 2013 it became evident that there is a disconnect between the creation of the policies and its implementation, despite the importance that the policy holds. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children brings to light that the interests of the children should govern the decisions made and be the central priority when it comes to education. Moreover, parents should play a critical role in nurturing the child to reach his or her potential (Disability Policy of Swaziland, 2013). In acknowledging this sentiment, the question comes to mind are: Who it is that makes the best decision for the deaf learner? Who is charged with this task? Who is seeing to it that all of these policies are being implemented when it comes to a deaf learner? What follow up or provisions are being made in order to ensure that education of the deaf is truly meeting the standard for which these policies are trying to uphold? Moreover, what statistics are available in Swaziland that indicates where deaf people have been employed as a means to measure the quality of education for the deaf. Particularly, the policy also recognises the goal of independent living of deaf individuals and others with disabilities. The idea here is that a person's peer groups will provide the support or guidance necessary to assist in helping them succeed in reaching an independent lifestyle. If this is the case, then steps need to be taken in order to bridge the prevailing gap that hinders deaf children from being full citizens in Swaziland and able to partake in all aspects of life, making the residential life at the school

being more meaningful to the deaf learner, enriching and nurturing the learner in such a way that they are able to cultivate the skills needed to indeed live independently.

4.3 PLACES AND SPACES OF DEAF LEARNERS IN A SPECIAL SCHOOL

4.3.1 Deaf learners' education not receiving proper attention

Participants of the study clearly stressed the significance of recognising the places and space of deaf learners in Swaziland. Deaf learners in the country only receive a fraction of information as compared to their hearing peers and this greatly hinders their progress. Through recognising Swazi Sign Language as a medium of education for the deaf, it is recognising that the language and culture of the deaf is as important as the language and culture of the hearing community, and moreover, that the deaf are not lacking from not being exposed to an oral-only education. This is supported by how deaf education is handled in Swaziland. Means were not made to cater for the deaf children, whereas these provisions were made for hearing people. Although, after the construction of the school for the deaf high school, a promise emerged in presenting future opportunities for deaf learners but there is nothing much that has been achieved. However, these sites continue to be inadequately supported to meet the needs of the deaf learners. This is largely due to grasping the view that sign language is not the most important aspect of deaf education. In this sense, deaf individuals need to be a part of the implementing institutions that make the decisions of how they should be taught and assessed. Romano (2013) criticises that outsiders view Sign Language as a crutch that is only to supplement education of the deaf, yet there is a need for teachers to be trained in Sign Language and some aspects of education need to be taught from the deaf culture perspective.

Romano (2013) further supports the value of a residential school as a place where positive relationships can be developed between teachers, peers and other staff in the deaf learners natural language (sign language). This would enable a friendly and welcoming environment to be developed which would nurture and encourage the deaf learners as they strive for academic success and learn how to advocate for themselves. Thus, the advantage of a deaf child being at a residential school is this holistic social support that continues beyond the classroom setting in the dormitories. These social interactions are vital because it addresses the psycho-social needs of the learner and is able to interrogate the matters that the child may have, therefore building a strong community of support that is unavailable at home.

4.3.2 Personhood of deaf learners not valued

The welfare of deaf learners is not taken care of. This is evident by the state and conditions of the structures in which the deaf learners are living. In reflecting on the photovoice project, Mbonisi took pictures of the dilapidated hostel. Meaning of place becomes grounded in his feelings that are attached to this space, reflections of how he feels society views and values deaf people.



The images are of the boys' hostel. You can see that one toilet is covered with a large stone to prevent the boys from using it, while the sink faucets are tied so the water cannot be turned on. The window is missing the glass. All of these pictures highlight the state of the living conditions of the children at the school for the deaf. (Mbonisi, age 16, photovoice)

Goodfellow (2012) acknowledges that there is a link between schools and the broader communities, which reflect the values and beliefs associated with schooling. This means that schools are symbolic places that hold meaning to people not only within the schooling environment, but those outside the school as well, who have their own agendas for the purpose the school is supposed to address. In this case, looking at the images above, the deaf learners infer that the wider society in Swaziland do not value their personhood, for if they did, more effort would be made to renovate the facilities and provide the resources and services needed for quality education for all. The deaf learners suffer from mosquito bites, and the cold drafts in winter because means have not been made to correct the damage that has been made to the structures. Moreover, it goes back to the involvement in decision making and providing a platform for them to voice out their problems and concern.

Tisdall and Punch (2012) argued that it is clear that children's geographies plays a special and separate role compared to adult geographies. This is contrary to popular beliefs that children are incapable of making rational decisions or that children do not have rights that need to be observed and strictly followed. Also, this is at war with the understanding that children are empty vessels and that they have no agency of their own to make good decisions and act appropriately. While authors such as Tisdall and Punch (2012) critique older scholars on their biases towards children, it is evident that such biases are still visible when it comes to education today.

Goodfellow (2002) acknowledged that a space gains meaning through becoming a place within which a person or people attached a specific meaning or feeling to it. In this sense, a space can be rendered a "realm without meaning" until the meaning emerges from the people

that inhabit the space. Goodfellow even goes on to suggest that places can be a location of power. In other words, spaces such as the hostels at the school become places with meaning.

4.3.3 Navigating the residential school setting

Interview with the participants of the study reveals that currently, career guidance is not offered to the deaf learners and provisions are not made to look at what options are available to them once they complete school, or even that steps are being made to eliminate the barriers in place that will prevent them from accessing the workforce (e.g. lack of interpreting services, etc.). This negatively impacts the learners who feel confused about their future and what is possible for them. Measures have been taken by the parents in conjunction with the school administrators after noting the age of the learners (all of whom were 19 and older) to enrol some deaf learners in a vocational school where they have been exposed to the vocational training in different skills, some with needlework, agriculture, with motor mechanic, building and welding. These learners seem to do better than in class and they are being attached to centres for assessment by the vocational college. Needlework and agriculture proved to be particularly successful vocations because they were able to navigate the language barrier easier since the contents of the training were more practical-based.

Some students have training such as motor mechanics and metal work. The student in motor mechanics and metal work had more challenges because there was more theory involved and no teacher designated to interpret for them throughout the course. In this sense, the researcher has found that these vocational opportunities that offers practical skills training allows the deaf learner to be more independent and boosts their self-esteem as they are able to visibly see their progress. From these vocations, deaf learners were able to acquire the skills needed to be self-reliant and self-standing, because these vocations are preparing them for the world

of work. As many deaf learners are often children of single parents, it means that they can also work to support their families and help build a brighter future.

When these opportunities are provided, it enables the deaf to be more independent, but there is still a gray area, in the people who are supposed to be nurturing and encouraging the deaf to reach a greater potential. Teachers and support staff need to have empathy and accept deaf culture and sign language into their hearts and encourage the deaf learners to have equal opportunities like their hearing peers, and ensuring that the deaf children can exercise their rights, as shown by the Disability Policy of 2013.

This is directly linked to what Romano (2013) identified as the importance of having deaf role models within a residential school. However, because there are limited deaf mentors in the school, it restricts the good performance of the deaf learners, disabling them to meet their potential and as a result the deaf learners in Swaziland are unable to pass the same examination that was catered for their hearing peers. Deafness is not even being considered when policies or curriculums are introduced.

4.3.4 Interaction and personal growth

With regard to interaction and personal growth the deaf learners felt that the hearing individuals were laughing and making fun of them. It transpired that the interaction between the hearing individuals (such as teachers) was minimal. The interaction was observed between the deaf learners and was enhancing their personal growth. The deaf learners had this to say:

“Its’ really nice, sign language is used to make jokes, but only when house parents are in a good mood. I try to interact with the male teachers mostly about

football, not female teachers because they are always busy.” (Thomas, Individual Interview).

“The books are really hard for me to understand. The teachers never consider us when they are going to be away, our teacher doesn’t tell us when she is going to the bank, and there is no learning [on that day].” (Tiny, Individual Interview).

“I like learning and gaining experience so that I can be a strong high school girl. From GLOW I learn leadership, abstinence, budgeting and finance and HIV prevention.” (Violet, Individual Interview).

Thomas applauds what is said by what is being acknowledged by Durr (1999) who distinguished that certain measures must be in place to fully support the deaf learners. These measures include the ability to communicate freely and learn without barriers, as well as the acceptance of a Deaf Identity. This is even challenging when it comes to the deaf adults who are not empowered themselves.

Even the teachers are not well-versed in deaf culture or sign language, leaving the deaf learners to be confused as they are miss-using signs and speaking, depriving the deaf learner the opportunity to learn. Acculturation is significant and is also recognized by Thomas in his individual interview, as a means for deaf learners to communicate freely. In this Thomas pinpoints the “good mood” of the house parents, and that as a contributing factor in his interactions with them. With the temperamental behaviour or attitudes of the house parents towards deaf culture and Sign Language, there is a gap where demonstrations of values and beliefs are hindered and are not exchanged, thus depriving the deaf learners from gaining valuable social skills. Durr (1999) emphasised the importance of positive role models for the deaf, which acknowledges that deaf staff would allow for socialization and other indirect learning from the deaf learners. Being at the school with the deaf adults, the deaf adults play the role that are supposed to be played by the parents at home, yet because of the

circumstances, the presence of deaf staff are invaluable to ensuring that deaf learners receive an adequate and supported education.

Assimilation of new students is extremely visible within the residential school when a new student enters the school population. Older learners will take the child under their wing, teaching them Sign Language and social skills, that they were excluded from in the hearing environment they experienced at home.

“When we return home since most of us are from hearing families we are not likely to communicate through the same language we use at school, which consequently impacts our language and social development.” (Mbonisi, Focus Group).

Reiterating the importance of appropriate cultural assimilation for staff into the deaf world and danger of lacking these meaningful interactions, Durr (1999) concurred that value should be placed on providing the appropriate and adequate training of teachers and staff in the ways of deaf culture, Sign Language, as well as other skills and resources that will enable these people to work effectively within the schooling environment.

This is endorsed by Staten (2011) who in acknowledging the benefits of residing in a learning environment within a residential deaf school. Such an environment places emphasis on communication and creating a friendly and comfortable learning environment for the learners, as well as providing the training necessary for independence upon the completion of school. Teamwork can be understood as an imperative asset towards creating a successful learning environment; however lack of teamwork can cause great strife between the learners, staff, teachers and administration, disabling the development of the school from reaching the overall goals. Teamwork encourages self-discipline which should be cultivated.

4.3.5 Hostel Life and House Parents



The images are of the boys' hostel. You can see that the ceiling is broken and the roof is leaking. The dustbin is kept in the house at night in a bid to prevent dogs from spilling them. However, the smell from the dustbins poses a challenge to us as def learner when studying. All of these pictures highlight the state of the living conditions of the deaf learners at the school for the deaf. (Mbonisi, age 16, photovoice)

The above pictures captured by Mbonisi where he acknowledges the factors that hinder his performance. Here he identifies the poor living environment in the hostels. He mentioned that not having a study table in the hostel impedes his study skills because he cannot study for a long time while lying on bed. He also drew attention to the state of the infrastructure, explaining that it is not a conducive learning environment. These claims were also supported by the other boys who took part in the study. The ceiling drips when it is raining and it causes stress when they sleep because they are worried things may fall from the ceiling. The lights have also not been replaced, so that makes it even more difficult to study or even socialize, as light is key to Deaf Culture. As the school is under Free Primary Education, there is no financial means to fix the school. This poses many challenges in creating a healthy and comfortable environment for the children.

Mbonisi also complained about the house parents' decision to place the dust bins at the hostel at night, to avoid having the contents scattered by the dogs. However, the current solution has caused frustration in the boys' hostel, because it has a very bad smell and the male

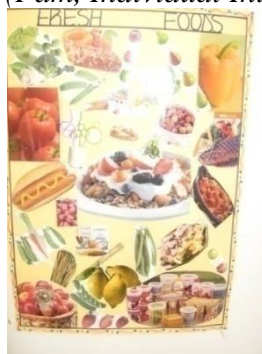
participants in the study feel like their feelings or experiences were not considered when the decision was made to place the dust bin in the hostel. The dust bin is even placed next to one of the beds, so the boys that sleep there do not sleep well and often feel sick. Though the boys like the hostel life because they enjoy socializing and making jokes, but they also need the study time where each individual can sit down and read and complete his or her homework. However, because of the state of the hostels, it is a scary environment.

House parents have a great role to play with deaf learners. They are expected to help them with homework, as if they were their very own parents. The house parents should also take the deaf learners into consideration and try to assist them as if they are their own children. In this sense, the deaf children are seeking consistent support and help as a means for them to achieve.

4.3.6 Teaching aids and academic support

Teaching aids and mechanic support is important for deaf learners just like it is with ‘normal learners’. The participants had this to say:

The use of teaching aids with pictures and the use of Deaf support teacher who teaches art helps me a lot (Pam, Individual Interview).



“I like to learn more in the school like cooking and sewing and the skills I acquire in the hostel” –Tiny, age 15, female, Photovoice interview

When it comes to assessment, the deaf learners pinpointed the challenges they face when it comes to sign language and English.

“Sign Language assessment is what I think is the best way to evaluate deaf learners. It’s hard for me to understand English, Sign Language is good.” (Mbonisi, Individual Interview).

“English is used when teaching and it’s difficult. Most of the words are the same or a little different which makes me not able to express myself when writing composition. This was caused by my late admission to school and I think if I were admitted earlier I would be doing well.” (Individual Interview).

Romano (2013) citing Meyer (2007) identifies the danger of delayed access to language for deaf children, and the need for early intervention. Employing such tactics would help the deaf learners meet the standards that their hearing peers naturally acquire. As deaf learners’ primary language is Sign Language, and language acquisition is active at a very early age before 5 years: deaf learners must be provided the resources and services to assist them in learning this language. Similarly, Sign Language should be the primary means of education for the deaf, and the medium through which all lessons are taught (Namukoa, 2012). This reiterates the statements made by the students regarding the best method through which they could access the curriculum, which is through the use of Sign Language. Even the complaints by the teachers who claim they do not have the right signs for some words add strain to being able to deliver the information in an understandable way. This complication is acknowledged by Stoerbeck, Magongwa and Parkin (2009) who admitted that Sign Language is prohibited from progressing if its main speakers are not afforded an education that can enhance their vocabulary and facilitation skills. Thus, it becomes a dreadful cycle that prevents the deaf community from moving forward. Moreover, it makes it difficult to find that there are not enough signs to deliver the curriculum, which frustrates learners and teachers alike.

Siswati Sign Language has been stagnated by the lack of educated deaf people in Swaziland. The government should make provisions for deaf learners to be admitted into the tertiary

levels so that they can develop a broader vocabulary and bring that back to the primary and secondary levels of education.

The deaf learners also called attention to the struggle that teachers face in the classroom when they are not provided the resources or support to adequately teach the curriculum.

“Teachers do not teach clearly and they leave things that they do not understand.” (Violet, Individual interview).

“We are behind because teachers are late. If the work is explained it is easy to follow, but it is difficult to read because we do not know all of the words. Difficult lessons are also not taught.” (Bheki, Individual Interview).

This is passionately supported by Stoerbeck, Magongwa and Parkin (2009) who mentioned that there is a danger to teachers leaving out specific topics for various reasons, for example, the hindrance of the development of Sign Language, or even the very way in which the teachers view the abilities of the learners. Often, the deaf learners are under-estimated. In addition, the major issue is that while the deaf and hearing learners follow the same curriculum, the deaf learners are being left behind because they do not complete the content as can be witnessed in the reasons above. Despite this, the information in the curriculum is relevant even to deaf learners and they are being cheated when the information is not covered due to either teacher incompetence or the undeveloped sign language.

The researcher supports the above claim because it is the reason why the school does not want to take the same external paper as the mainstream schools. This is because teachers have to omit content that they find challenging to cover due to the language barrier and communication challenges. The curriculum can be the same, but made simpler in a way so that ideas and concepts can be clearly explained with pictures in order to assist the deaf in creating more and more signs. This could be used more easily by the school to teach. Since, teachers are lacking the skills of sign language and the correct signs, consequently fail to

finish the curriculum in one year, as most of the work has to be signed within the context. This makes it challenging for the deaf when it comes to assessment.

Moreover, the arbitrary recruitment of teachers and house parents has resulted in great stress at the schooling environment. McNeish (2013) argued that it is crucial for the school leaders to adequately plan so that teachers, staff and other relevant members of the community are able to reach and equip the learners meaningfully. This is necessary in order to ensure quality inclusive education for the deaf. Secondly, part of this thoughtful planning includes being critical when selecting the staff and teachers that are to interact with the learners, they note that devoted and excellent staff should be the priority when recruiting, which also includes the superiors in deaf education.

The people recruited to work at the school should be those that have the heart and knowledge of what it is like to work with deaf people. When individuals are recruited without these specific skills, it poses challenges and hinders learning of the deaf as their specific needs continue not to be met. To add on that, even the deaf adults themselves who should be the leaders in developing their own language have met barriers due to their lack of education, as they did not have the opportunity to go to high school. DesGeorges (2014) concurs that advocacy for deaf education needs to come from within the school community, including the parents and even the learners themselves. This is pivotal to ensuring that the deaf learners are granted access to the education they deserve by means of the communication methods that best suit them. After having said all of this, it proves that for the deaf education to be improved, parents of deaf learners have to come together and try challenge the ministry to truly raise the expectations and make noise about the deaf learners, in a way that the government will take their concerns into consideration.

4.4 SUPPORT MECHANISMS

4.4.1 Help from the house parents at the hostels

Deaf learners need to get support from the house parents. House parents were to assist the deaf learners when they are at the hostels. Some of the participant made the following statements:

“It is important to be patient with me. I keep asking until I understand. I do not overcome academic challenges, if not having a deep explanation and misunderstanding words.” (Bheki, Individual Interview).

‘I study and ask teachers to explain again or give more of the stuff or clarification, sometimes we have study groups and ask my friends if they are having problems.’ (Mbonisi, Individual Interview).

“I ask teachers for advice, when I’m at the hostel, I ask the house parents for help and then try.” (Bheki, Individual Interview).

“I do not have tables to use for studying so I do not perform well.” (Mbonisi, Focus Group).

“Not knowing English because of limited vocabulary and no consistent help by the house parents.” (Tiny, Focus Group).

Bheki where he values the help from the house parents at the hostels, it becomes clear that holistic support of the deaf learner is essential to their general wellbeing. This is supported by Lucas (n.d.) who drew attention to the educational abuse experienced by many deaf individuals globally due to stigmatization. Lucas highlighted the need for encouragement that deaf learners crave when living at a residential school because they do not have their parents support in learning or in socialising. Lucas lamented his schooling experience because he wished he had had house parents that behaved in the way that his biological parents did. Though Bheki received assistance from his house parents, it transpired that other house parents did not offer such assistance and kept time for themselves, depriving the deaf learners the opportunity to get the help they needed. Moreover, it would be beneficial if house parents

worked to encourage and engage the deaf learners, to build a positive relationship with them that generated trust and the much needed nurturing that they are unable to receive at home.

4.4.2 Teachers use Sign Language to deaf learners

Teachers in the school for the deaf must use Sign Language to teach deaf learners. This is an essential support mechanism for the deaf learners. Sign Language is the only language understood by deaf learners. Lucas recognized the challenges that deaf learners face when teaching strategies and methods are not standardized. Lucas also argued that educators and staff have a strong foundation in Sign Language and must use different approaches in teaching the deaf. This would enable the deaf learners to build on their language skills and be able to express themselves on a deeper level. If this is not provided, the children will struggle through education and may even cause them to drop out of school. When staff and teachers are not signing at the same level and fluctuate between varied signs, it can cause confusion and stagnate the learning. These inconsistencies truly pose a challenge for the learner as they move from class to class and subject to subject with new teachers who have a different way of signing or communicating with them.

Pickersgill (1998) asserted that the learning needs of deaf children are recognized as different from those of hearing children. Decisions about linguistic support should be based on strengths and not the perceived weaknesses of the children. Pickersgill further extrapolates that both Sign Language and English Language should be languages of instruction and subjects of study. The development of Sign Language and English usage should be in accordance to the child's preference, and the rights of deaf learners should be observed.

Lucas (n.d.) concludes that it is vital that there be professional individuals involved in educating and nurturing deaf learners. These people require hands-on experience in teaching

the deaf and secondly, they must be trained in deaf education and not special needs educations, as this is training for an inclusive setting. A residential school is not an inclusive set up, instead, all learners have a degree of hearing loss or deafness and require education that is suitable for them. Finally, such individuals need to be well-versed in sign language and be encouraged to learn such a special and valuable language. Even the government has to see it that the people who are teaching sign language are being paid.

4.4.3 Considering deaf learners on curriculum development and setting examinations

The people who are responsible for writing the curriculum, examination and other aspects affecting the education of the deaf need to come and assess the learning experienced in a residential school so that they can start planning new strategies to assist the deaf learners in achieving their goals along with other hearing children, so long as their native language and culture are considered as the keystone to the success and future of deaf children.

Marshack (2010) revealed that deaf students do not always learn, think, or know in the same ways as hearing children. This has resulted in a high failure rate of deaf learners in the external examination, thus hindering the appropriate recognition of their potential, and further constructing their identities as deaf learners. Pickersgill (1998) concurred with Marshack that the learning needs of deaf children are recognized as different from those of hearing children. Decisions about access to the curriculum and relevant assessments should be based on strengths and not the perceived weaknesses of the children. Therefore, curriculum should respond to the linguistic and cultural pluralism of society. Pickersgill also mentioned that the development of curriculum-based signs should be done by, and in consultation with, deaf people for both Sign Language and English.

4.5 CONCLUSION

To conclude, there are many provisions that need to be made for a Swazi deaf learner in a residential school to be able to adequately access the curriculum and excel in education. The true partnership between the people working with the deaf learner which includes teachers, house parents, the government and parents in order to improve what is lagging behind in deaf education is necessary. Further suggestions and recommendations as to how to move forward will be addressed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study sought to explore the geographies of deaf learners in a residential school for the deaf in Swaziland. Here, the focus was to understand how deaf learners negotiate the complex and varied spaces of schooling. This was observed through the several frameworks, the first being social constructivism as well as children's geographies and narrative inquiry. The study sought to create a platform for the deaf learners to "voice" their concerns and speak out about their experiences at the school, what challenges they faced and what could be improved. Due to the language barrier the deaf learners have had little opportunity to express themselves and get their needs met. This study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What stories do deaf learners tell about their school experiences in one school for the deaf in Swaziland?
- 2) What are the dynamics affecting deaf learners in the schooling context?
- 3) What are the spaces and places of deaf learners within schooling complex?
- 4) How do deaf learners negotiate the complex and varied spaces of schooling?

This chapter presents the summary of the findings, theoretical methodological reflections, followed by the limitations of the study and then the methodological aim of the study. The implications of the study will also be interrogated, then the policy and practise, and finally recommendations for further research will be discussed, ending with the conclusions of the study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

5.2.1 Experiences of deaf learners at a school for the deaf

Based on what the data revealed on the lived experiences of the participants at the special school for the deaf, the use of sign language and recognition of deaf culture is of utmost importance. It appeared that sign language played a major role in their experiences in the schooling context, as it is the only medium of communication used in the classroom, socialising and the hostel life. It was observed by the participants that the staff and teachers did not take sign language or deaf culture seriously thus do not use it most of the time. The teachers have a negative attitude towards the deaf learners. Furthermore, the deaf learners also reported that they are also stigmatized for being deaf.

5.2.2 Dynamics affecting deaf learners within the residential school context

There is a disconnect between deaf learners and their parents or care givers whereby the deaf learners believe their parents do not value their education or do not find it important, as compared to their hearing siblings at home. The disconnection is caused by the prevailing stigmatisation of the deaf child in the family; by the parents and also by the siblings. It is expected that teachers and house parents should work to reach out to the deaf learners' biological parents. Parental involvement in the education of a deaf learner is crucial. Thus parents need counselling to become empowered to overcome the stigma that they hold on their deaf children. Deaf learners also reported that they suffer stigmatization. The stigmatisation may also come from the teachers who are unable to socialise with the deaf learners, and the stigmatisation goes beyond into the curriculum as some items are excluded due to the belief that the deaf learners cannot learn certain material. This is embedded in the ignorance of the teachers and disinterest in learning sign language which would enable them

to engage the learners at a deeper level, in particular during the extra-curricular activities, which were revealed as the most valued part of the schooling experience by the deaf learners.

Living in a residential school was something that the deaf learners fully appreciated and enjoyed because of the variety of extra-curricular activities and being able to socialise with their fellow deaf peers. However, in terms of academics, the deaf learners expressed disappointment in how they felt they were treated by the teachers in the classroom, relating to the expectations they held for the teachers as role models for learning. Local and international documents such as conventions and policies spell out the expected role of deaf learners in their education yet despite that, there has been limited involvement of the deaf learners in decision making. Similar observations have been witnessed at the school, whereby power dynamics affect the decisions that are made, and are often not favourable to the deaf learners (e.g. excluding contents of the curriculum or establishing an academic track from pre-school to tertiary). The interests of the deaf learners are not represented or taken as a necessary aspect of improvement in deaf education.

The participant felt that deaf learners should be recognized as their own cultural group and not stigmatised as this stigma goes a long way. When the stigma is removed, the deaf individuals will be seen as valuable stakeholders in their lives and will be included in decision making, whether internationally or locally.

5.2.3 Places and spaces of deaf learners in a special school

Findings of the study revealed that deaf learners' education does not receive proper attention in Swaziland. Nothing much is being done in the education system or structure to cater for the deaf learners, but rather continued to cater to hearing learners. This includes the limited use of Sign Language, curriculum and the assessment of the deaf learners. The measures

utilised to assess deaf learners (e.g. examinations) were the same as those for the hearing, despite the fact that the measures should be adjusted to meet the specific qualities of deaf learners. The value of learning that takes place in a special school is beyond the classroom because of the unique peer-to-peer interactions that deaf learners are allowed to engage in, as compared to what they might experience in a mainstream school.

The participants felt that structures should be put in place to cater to the specific needs of the deaf learners concerning their education, including prioritising the use of sign language as a medium of instruction and to explore the curriculum. In addition to further developing the curriculum, teaching aids and teacher education on sign language and deaf culture needs to be incorporated into teacher education.

Hostel life and house parents are an integral part of life at a special school. House parents need specific training and encouragement to socialise and act as surrogate parents to the deaf learners while they are at school.

5.2.4 Support Mechanism

House parents are expected to provide support to the deaf learners including writing assignments. Teachers in the school for the deaf must use Sign Language to teach deaf learners as it is the only language understood by deaf learners. The people who are responsible for writing the curriculum, examination and other aspects affecting the education of the deaf need to do so within the scope of the deaf culture.

5.3 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

The study interrogated the experiences and constructions of deaf learners through the theoretical frameworks of social constructivism and children's geographies. This theoretical lens was selected to delve into the lived experiences of the participants to understand their perspective and how they create a sense of meaning in the schooling space, as well as what they understand the role of their education to be. As supported by Goodfellow (2012), the deaf learners were taken as knowledgeable about their own experiences, and this enabled the researcher to validate the lived experiences of the learners. Given this, the study adopted an interpretive paradigm which was supported by Cohen et. al. (2007) characterising this paradigm as having a particular focus on "the subjective world of human experiences" (p. 21). The use of this method enabled me as an educator of the deaf to probe and acquire first hand experiences about the deaf learners specific experiences with how they negotiate the schooling context. This also allowed me to gain insight into the dynamics that shape and impact how they see the world around them. Through my epistemological view, knowledge was generated through the interpretations made by the study participants of their experiences. This approach assisted in helping me to better understand the challenge deaf learners face with negotiating the strict paradigm of their individual perception of self as a deaf learner and the perceptions held by the hearing people who dictate their world. The study revealed that the perceptions of the hearing staff and teachers greatly impact their performance as learners in the school, conflicting with the positive senses of self they feel in specific activities that boost their self-esteem and confidence, such as during the trips, such as extra-curricular activities or in practical subjects.

This approach placed value on the depth of information that was extracted from the participants' lived experiences as presented through the narrative inquiry. Here care is put to

acknowledge stories as the entry point into understanding people's lives. The use of photovoice as a participatory technique was also beneficial to ensure that the researcher could explore the deeper meaning embedded in the images. In this way, it critically illustrates the greater phenomena that the deaf learners are encompassed in and that impacts how they navigate the space in the educational context. For data analysis, my research followed the inductive process. This was due to the fact that the data collection process was to code and theme the various traits that emerged from the participants as they were engaged in the study. The data revealed that acknowledgement of sign language and deaf culture was of utmost importance to how the students interact within the schooling context and also tied to their identity as a researcher and teacher of the deaf.

5.3.1 Thematic reflection of the study

As explored by Carlson (2010), where the notion of authority is called into question in the research, it has been revealed how learners are tortured under the accusation of being naughty. This was confirmed when learners had to take pictures for the photo voice, but resulted in the deaf learners being scolded and even beaten because they thought the deaf learners were going to tell lies about their experiences. This action of the house parents led to the learners taking limited pictures because they were scared of being scolded or other negative outcomes. This undermining behaviour towards the deaf learners is interrogated by Holloway and Valentine (2000) cited by Skhakhane (2015) that minors are individuals who are able to advocate for themselves about their experiences of social worlds in which they are living in. Through the usage of the theory, children were given a platform to narrate their experiences at the school. However, as witnessed above, this platform was never taken seriously, but rather revealed the insecurities and lack of trust of the hearing personnel in how they interact and view the children. In this sense, the platform did not hold as much power as the study had intended. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) illustrate further by citing that "the

researcher needs to learner as much as possible from the participants about their perceptions of the nature and impact of the experience” (p. 363). This echoes that the researcher could have gotten more from the participants if it was not for the verbal and physical abuse.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several limitations were identified at the completion of the study. The reactions of the hearing personnel in relation to the photovoice limited the study because the deaf learners might have taken a lot of photos and even in the face to face interviews. I felt that the children were withholding some of their experiences because they did not trust that I wouldn't tell the hearing personnel, which included house parents, teachers and other support staff employed at the school. Since this is a boarding school, fully scheduled with the daily activities done at the school, the participants were interviewed in the evening and unfortunately they were tired at this time of the day. Time further posed a problem as it limited the depth to which the deaf children could tell their stories. In addition, the interviews (both individual and focus group) consumed a lot of time and ended very late, possibly because there were so many questions that needed to be interrogated as part of the study.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

A main facet of the study was questioning whether the deaf learners are accommodated by the places and spaces of the schooling complex. Although the study revealed that a residential school served as a space where deaf learners have the opportunity to learn and grow from deaf mentors, the deaf are not in control of their space. This means that recommendations should include finding methods and strategies to ensure that deaf learners and individuals are a part of decision making and that their language and identities are valued. In this case, there is a need that there be a deaf person in the ministry who is responsible for the improvements and developments of the school for the deaf.

In addition to that, deaf adults should be trained and employed by the ministry to work in the educational setting to support the learning of deaf learners. Moreover, parents should be engaged as key stakeholders in looking at the future careers and opportunities of their children. Given the communication gap between the learners and parents or guardians it is vital that steps be made to address this language barrier to further enhance any educational growth of the deaf learners.

Teachers should dedicate their time and energy to developing the curriculum to enhance the learning that can be completed in the classroom. Teachers should also model the desired behaviour to the children. For instance, if the teachers want learners to be punctual, teachers must be the first to be punctual. Teachers also need to show the learners that they have faith in their capabilities and challenge the learners to perform beyond whatever barrier is there before them. It is an obligation that teachers, house parents and even the support staff working within the deaf community should be competent in sign language. The education office in the region must know how to address the children, as it is the only primary school for the deaf in Swaziland. As a researcher, I would advocate that deaf learners should not be left out when decisions are being made that are influential in improving their learning. There should be provision made for deaf learners, whether at vocational or at tertiary, now that our deaf learners have the opportunity to go up to Form 5.

5.5.1 Policy and Practise

In observing and analysing the policies related to the study, it became evident that although these policies are well-thought out, the implementation aspect needs to be seriously monitored and adjusted to be effective. Moreover, a major fault of the policies is that it focuses on the umbrella of disability rather than focusing specifically on deaf people and their needs within education. The deaf have their culture, their identity, their language, which has

to be brought to attention to the decision makers. Due to this oversight, often, the important and valuable role of an interpreter is often overlooked. Therefore, interpreters need to be hired and available on a more prevalent basis.

In addition to all of that, having suitable staff and resources would displace the strain put on teachers to make up for what is not made available, this places extra pressures and responsibilities and teachers become resentful when others expect more of them, when they are already going above and beyond what is expected. As uncovered from the study, in teaching the deaf, the whole way of teaching and addressing the children needs to be adapted to the specific environment. While hearing teachers can continue using the languages they were trained in, and the methods they learned at the teaching colleges, these concepts, theories and methodologies are inadequate in the deaf education setting. They need to be transformed. This could be facilitated through workshops and trainings for teachers of the deaf to empower them. This is the only primary school for the deaf in Swaziland, so it needs to serve as the forerunner in deaf education. Teachers from other schools could be invited to come and benchmarking could take place.

A paramount part of policy creation and implementation is ensuring that deaf learners and deaf individuals play a significant role in decision making as education for deaf moves forward in Swaziland. Perhaps one of the main issues that the deaf have not been included in decision making is the lack of education that they have received to render them as “qualified” enough to make recommendations for their live. This would also ensure that deaf learners and individuals receive the skills needed to earn their living as they grow into adults. Parents also need to play a role in the education of their deaf children. Policies should include parents as key stakeholders moving forward. There should be a parent representative to visit the

institution and evaluate the living experience and education of the deaf learners and then report back to other parents. In addition, this individual could provide recommendations on how to improve the school. This would also encourage early identification and admission of deaf learners at the school so that the deaf learners can enter school at the age of 3 years and be enrolled at the pre-school until the age of 6 years, as right now deaf learners remain at the primary level until they even 21 years old.

5.5.2 Further research

When considering further and future research, there are several areas that could lend to the study and build on the foundation already created. Such research includes: addressing the experiences of house parents in a residential school. This could incorporate the role of the house parent and creating a deaf-friendly environment. Moreover, this would support the research on creating relationships between deaf learners and hearing personnel or parents that will result in building trust. An additional research topic could include better understanding the aspirations and goals of deaf learners living in a residential school. There should also be a study of the sign language itself in Swaziland is it complex enough to be used sufficiently as a medium of instruction up to tertiary. As most of the workshops that are carried by SNAD are social-oriented, but not addressing the subjects and concepts that need to be covered in classroom. In addition, a study on the involvement of the adult deaf learners in developing the education of the deaf in Swaziland is necessary.

5.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings seem to admit what is lamented by Oscar Cohen (1994) that “inclusion should not include deaf” as deaf learners should be considered as independent learners who have their own culture, identity and language. They also need not to be fitted in

the normalization principle. When deaf learners are in a residential school of the deaf, with deaf mentors, the deaf culture is instilled and the Sign Language which is used to deliver the curriculum as well. When the deaf child is discovered as early as possible by the time the learner is admitted at school, she/he will get the full access to communication to the peers and fully develop their cognitive and social aspects.

Thus the need to learn Sign Language at early in their lives could address the problems of the poor performance of deaf learners in a residential school. This led to the study of their geographies and how they negotiate the complex dynamics of the schooling context. In this sense, it became apparent that the deaf learners are being blamed and stigmatised because of their poor performance in school, because they are deaf. Hearing personnel fail to recognise that these “poor performances” actually stem from the fact that deaf learners are expected to assimilate to hearing culture and a hearing way of education, a space they cannot fairly compete in. Instead, deaf learners should not be assimilated, but rather, deaf culture and sign language should be valued as a meaningful part of their education.

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APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



14 October 2015

Ms Honeydale N Nhleko 214584114
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0211/015M
Project title: The Geographies of Deaf Learners at a Special School for the Deaf in Swaziland.

Dear Ms Nhleko

Full Approval – Committee Reviewed Protocol

With regards to your response to received 06 October 2015 to our letter of 10 September 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the above mentioned application and the protocol has been granted **Full Approval**.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Professor PJ Morojele
cc Academic Leader Research:
cc School Administrator: Ms B Bhengu, Ms T Khumalo & Ms PW Ndimande

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymam@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

APPENDIX 2: LETTER TO DIRECTOR

Njabuliso Honeydale Nhleko
School for the Deaf Primary
P.O. Box 135, L300
7606 5053

Director of Education
Ministry of Education and Training
P.O.Box39
Mbabane,
H100
24042491/ 24045750/ 24043307

September 18, 2015

Dear Director,

I am writing to request permission to conduct research as part of my Master's Degree through the University of Kwazulu Natal, at Edgewood. The study is titled "Geographies of Deaf Learners in a Special School in Siteki".

Having worked at the school for more than 19 years as an educator and now Deputy Principal, I would like to study the barriers to learning for Deaf learners at the school for the Deaf. The research will include a PhotoVoice project whereby learners will be given a camera to capture images around the theme. These learners will then be interviewed with assistance from an interpreter and Deaf adult at the school, followed by a focus group discussion to build on greater information. There will be in total 6 learners interviewed, ranging in age from 14-18. Letters of consent will be given to participants 18 and above, and those below the age of 18 will have written consent from the parents.

UKZN requires a letter of consent from the Ministry of Education of Swaziland to conduct this research. I kindly request your approval for this project.

Thank you,

Njabuliso Honeydale Nhleko
TSC 14870

APPENDIX 3: LETTER OF APPROVAL

The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland



Ministry of Education & Training

Tel: (+268) 2 4042491/5
Fax: (+268) 2 404 3880

P. O. Box 39
Mbabane, SWAZILAND

9th September, 2015
2nd October, 2015

Attention:
Head Teachers:
School for the Deaf Primary

School for the Deaf High School

THROUGH
Lubombo Regional Education Officer

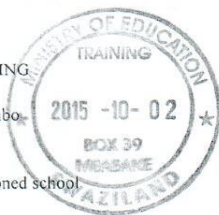
Dear Colleague,

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA UNIVERSITY OF KWA-ZULU NATAL
STUDENT – MS. NJABULISO HONEYDALE NHLEKO.**

1. Reference is made to the above mentioned subjects
2. The Ministry of Education and Training has received a request from Ms. Njabuliso H. Nhleko, that in order for her to fulfill her academic requirements at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, she has to collect data (conduct research) and her study or research topic is: *The Geographies of Slow Learners at the School for the Deaf: A Narrative Inquiry*. The Population of her study comprises of six learners from each of the above mentioned schools between the ages 14 to 18 years as well as adults from the above mentioned schools. All details concerning the study are stated in the participants' consent form which will have to be signed by all participants before Ms. Nhleko begins her data collection. Please note that parents will have to consent for all the participants below the age of 18 years participating in this study.
3. The Ministry of Education and Training requests your office to assist Ms. Nhleko by allowing her to use above mentioned schools in the Lubombo region as her research sites as well as facilitate her by giving her all the support she needs in her data collection process. Data collection period is one month.


DR. SIBONGILE M. MTSHALI-DLAMINI
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

cc: Regional Education Officer – Lubombo
Chief Inspector – Primary
Chief Inspector - Secondary
2 Head Teachers of the above mentioned school
Prof. P. Morojele & Prem Mohun



APPENDIX 4: PARENTAL CONSENT LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI



Incwadzi yemtali yekuvumela umntfwana kuba incenye yelucwaningo/Luhlolo

Mine _____ (libito lemtali leliphelele), umtali

Wa _____ (libito leliphelele lemfundzi)

Ngiyavuma kutzi ngiyakucondza lolokubhaliwe kulencwadzi, ngiyakucondza naloluhlobo lwalolucwaningo ngako ke ngiyamunika imvume lomntfwana kutsi abe yincenye yalolucwangingo.

Ngiyacondza futsi kutsi nginayo imvume yekukhipha umntfwana wami angabi yincenye yalolucwangingo noma ngabe kunini nangingasatsandzi. Nemntfwana naye uvumelekile kungasatimbandzakanyi kanye nalo lucwaningo noma ngabe kunini nasangasatfokoteli kuchubeka nalo lucwaningo.

Umtali Lusuku

APPENDIX 5: INFORMATION LETTER
UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL



INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

Mtali lohloniphekile,

Libito lami ngingu Honeydale Nhleko. Nginguthishela lapha eSchool for the deaf primary school. Ngekutsandza kuba nelwati lolwengetekile ekufundziseni bantwana lapha esikolweni, ngingenele tifundvo teticu teMasters. Ngifundza enyuvesi yaKwaZulu eNatal kani lofundzisa mine phindze angeluleke etifundvweni tami ngu Professor P. Morojele. Kuletifundvo tami kudzingeke ngente lucwaningo lesitsi pheceleti yi research. Lolucwaningo luhlolisisa kabanti tingcinamba letibangela umntfwana longeva etindlebeni abambe kancane etifundvweni takhe.

Ngicela ungivumele mtali kutsi ngisebentise umntfwanakho ngisenta lolucwaningo. Umntfwana kutawudzingeka atsatsa titfombe letikhomba tindlela lafundziswa ngayo lapha esikolweni. Utase njalo uhlanganisa letitfombe letikhomba tinhlangothi tonkhe tekufundza kwakhe eklasini. Lolucwaningo lutawutsatsa emalanga lamabili. Unalo lilungelo lekungavumeli umntfwanakho kungenela lolucwaningo. Yena ke umntfwana angalungenela uma afisa, atsandza noma akhetse kuba incenye yalo. Uma kungenteka ufise kumykelisa umntfwana noma ngabe abasalucalile lolucwaningo, uvumelekile kumykelisa.

Yonkhe imininingwane lesitawuhlephulelana yona nemntfwana itaba yimfihlo. Sitawusebentisa inombolo efayeleni lemntfwana. Tetsenjwa letinikwe imvume yiNyuvesi yaKwaZulu eNatal ngito kuphela letitaba nemvumo yekufundza imininingwane lesefayeleni lemntfwana.

Ngicela unake naloku mtali;

- Imininingwane letfolakala kulolucwaningo ngeke isetjentiswe kubopha thishela, noma umntfwana, nawe futsi mtali. Yonkhe lemininingwane yekwenta lolucwaningo nje kuphela.
- Lifayela lemntfwana litawungcinwa esisefeni lesivikelekile kutsi ngemva kweminyaka lesihlanu lishiswe.
- Lolucwaningo lwakhelwe kucondziswa kabanti bonkhe bulukhuni bantwana basesikolweni sebantwana labangeva labahlangana nako etifundvweni tabo.
- Uma kukutfokotisa kutsi umntfwanakho angenele lolucwaningo ngicela ukhombise ngekudvweba lokunje (✓) kutsi uyavuma. Uma ungavumi ungakhombisa ngekudvweba (X).

Ngicela usebentise yona lemidvwebo lengenhla (✓) noma (X) kukhomba luhlobo lwemishini loyivumelakokutsi kutsi ingasetjentiswa kusakhulunywa nemntfwana.

Ngiyavuma nemntfwana ☐

Angivumi nemntfwana ☐

Imishina lengasetjentiswa:

a) Titfombe ☐

b) Titfombe letingadlala kumabonakudze ☐

Uma kungaba khona imibuto lonayo mayelana nako konkhe lokuphatselene nalolucwaningo, ikakhulukati lokufaka umnfwana, ngingatfokota kuphendula yonkhe imibuto yakho. Ungamtsintsa nemeluleki wami ngekutsintsa lihhovisi lekucwaninga eNyuvesi yakwaZulu eNatal. Lapha ngentansi utotfola tinombolo lapha ungasitsintsa khona.

Ngiyabonga kakhulu kubambisana name kulolucwaningo.

Ms H.N.Nhleko (thishela lowenta lucwaningo)

Email: honeydale33@gmail.com

Cell: 76065053

Professor P. Morojele

Main Administration & Tutorial Building

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Contact details: Tel: +27(0)31-2603432

Fax: (27)31-2603650

Cell: +27(0)710410352

E-Mail: Morojele@ukzn.ac.za

Prem Mohum

University of KwaZulu-Natal

HSSREC Research Office

Govan Mbeki Centre

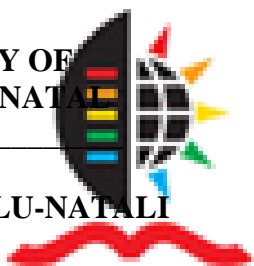
Contact detail: Tel: 0312604557

E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX 6: LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI



Dear Principal,

I am a Master's research student under the supervision of Professor P. Morojele in the School of Education and Development, Edgewood Campus University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a research study on the schooling experiences of deaf slow learners in Swaziland. The title of my study is **THE GEOGRAPHIES OF DEAF LEARNERS AT THE SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY.**

I am seeking your consent for learners' participation, which will involve extensive interview and story account sessions, and they will be required to take photographs of their activities at school over a period of one (1) months. The participants will also be required to make a collage (assemble images) that will represent their experiences at school. Your learners' participation in this research is voluntary, and continued participation is also by choice. You have the right to choose not to have your learners participate, and to withdraw your learners participating at any time.

There is no penalty if a learner chooses not to participate in this research or chooses to withdraw from participation at any time. The outcome of this research may be published. In the event of this being the case learners' name and identify will not be used.

All information you and your learners give concerning this research will be confidential. A code or number will identify the information your learners provide. Only authorized persons from the University of KwaZulu-Natal will have access to review the research records that contains your learners' information.

There is no benefit to your learners participating in this research.

Please note that:

- Any information given by your learners cannot be used against them, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- The research aims at understanding how the deaf slow learners experience school in Swaziland.

If you are willing for your learners to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable)

	Willing	Not Willing
Video equipment		
Photographic equipment		

If there is any question you wish to ask concerning the research or the participation of your learners in this research, please contact me or my supervisor Professor P. Morojele. You may also contact the Research Office through P. Mohun. Below are our contact details respectively:

Ms. H N Nhleko

Email: honeydale33@gmail.com

Cell: 76065053

Professor P. Morojele

Main Administration & Tutorial Building f

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Contact details: Tel: +27 (0) 31-260342

Fax: (27)31-2603650

Cell: +27 (0) 71 041 0352

Email: Morojele@ukzn.ac.za

Prem Mohun

University of kwaZulu-Natal

HSSREC Research Office

Govan Mbeki Centre

Contact detail: Tel: 0312604557

E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX 7: PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT LETTER

29th July 2014

Dear Participant

INFORMATION CONSENT LETTER

My name is Honeydale N Nhleko. I am a master student under the supervision of Professor P. Morojele in the School of Education and Development, Edgewood Campus University of Kwazulu-Natal. My master research is on the schooling experience of slow learners at the school for the deaf in Swaziland. The title of my study is **THE GEOGRAPHIES OF DEAF LEARNERS AT THE SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF(SWAZILAND); A NARRATIVE INQUIRY**. Your school is where i will be conducting my research. In order to gather information for the research, you will be given a disposable camera an asked to take photos of your experience at your school.

Please note that;

- Your participation in study consists of one interview and focus group discussion that will last no longer than 30 minutes each. These will be conducted only once.
- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The taking of pictures will last for two days and they will be printed there after. You will be asked to tell more about the pictures.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in a secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for tacking such an action.
- The research aims at understanding how slow learners at the school for the deaf experience schooling.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to take part, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to take part in the reaserch by taking photos, recorded and interviewed by the following equipment.

Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment	
Photographic equipment	
Video equipment	

I can be contacted at:

Email: honeydale33@gmail.com

Cell:76065053

As already mentioned above, my supervisor is Professor Pholoho Morojele. His office is located at Main Administration & Tutorial Building University of KwaZulu-Natal Edgewood Campus. Contact details:

[Tel:+27\(0\) 31-2603432](tel:+270312603432)

Fax:(27)31-2603650

Cell:+27 (0) 71 041 0352

E-Mail: Morojele@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:

Prem.Mohun

University of KwaZulu-Natal

HSSREC Research Office

Govan Mbeki Centre

Contact details: Tel: 031 260 4557

E-Mail: mohun@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

Sincerely,

Honeydale N. NhlekoLusuku

APPENDIX 8: DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI



DECLARATION BY THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

I _____ (full name of principal), principal of
_____ (full name of school)

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I hereby give my consent from my school/learners to participate in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my school from the research project at any time, should I so desire, and any participant is also at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should the participant so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL

DATE

APPENDIX 9: LETTER TO PARENTS

**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**

**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**



07th August 2014

Dear Parent of participant,

My name is Honeydale N Nhleko. I am a Master research student under the supervision of Professor P. Morojele in the School of Education and Development, Edgewood Campus University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a research study on schooling experiences of deaf learners in a residential school for the deaf in Swaziland.

I am seeking your consent for your child's participation, which will involve extensive interview and story account sessions, lasting no longer than 30 minutes in length for both the individual interview and focus groups. These interviews will only be conducted once. He/she will be required to take photographs of his/her activities at school over a period of one month. He/she will also be required to make a collage (assemble images) that will represent his/her experiences at school. Your child's participation in this research is voluntary, and continued participation is also by choice. You have the right to choose not to have your child participate, and to withdraw your child from participating at any time.

There is no penalty if your child chooses not to participate in this research or chooses to withdraw from participation at any time. The outcome of this research may be published. In the event of this being the case, your child's name and identity will not be used.

All information your child will give will be confidential. A code or number will identify the information your child provides. Only authorized persons from the University of KwaZulu-Natal will have access to review the research records that contains your child's information.

There is no benefit to your child participating in this research.

Please note that:

- Any information given by your child cannot be used against you, him/her, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- The research aims at understanding how deaf learners experience schooling at the school for the Deaf in Swaziland.
- If you are willing for your child to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

Willing	Not Willing
Audio equipment	
Photographic equipment	
Video equipment	

If there is any question you wish to ask concerning the research or the participation of your learners in this research, please you can contact me or my supervisor Professor P. Morojele. You may also contact the Research Office through P. Mohun. Below are our contact details respectively:

Miss. Honeydale N Nhleko

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Professor P. Morojele

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PremMohun

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HSSREC Research Office

Govan Mbeki Centre

Contact details: Tel: 031 260 4557

E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

Sincerely,

Honeydale N. Nhleko

APPENDIX 10: LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

ALFA RESEARCH CONSUNTANCY



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Manzini
Swaziland

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02 August 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to acknowledge that I have:

- Assisted in language editing
- Made recommendations for the student to attend to at her judgment on their dissertation:

The geographies of deaf learners in a special school in Swaziland: A Narrative Inquiry

By

Honeydale Njabuliso Nhleko



Alfred F. Tsikati
[Language Editor]

APPENDIX 11: TURNITIN REPORT

214584114 Honeydale Njabuliso Nhleko

ORIGINALITY REPORT

10 %	7 %	2 %	7 %
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper	2 %
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3	Submitted to Roehampton University Student Paper	<1 %
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